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REV. W. JONES'S LETTERS.

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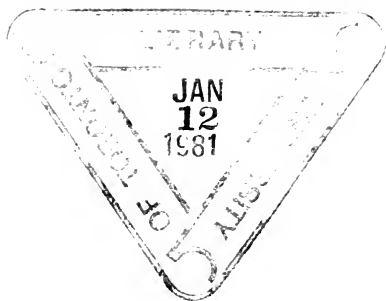
REV. W^m. JONES'S LETTERS
TO HIS PUPILS.



Engraved by M. G. S.

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1821



PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Letters having endeavoured to make himself as useful as he could in the execution of an important trust, not only by reading books with his pupils, and teaching sciences, but by conversing freely with them, as occasion required, on literary and moral subjects; he took frequent opportunities of committing to paper, in the form of a letter, the substance of what had passed in these conversations. And as all young people of the same station have a common interest in most of the subjects thus treated of, he thought it might be of service to select a few of these letters, and send them to the press; that when he has put them into the hands of his own pupils (for whose use they were intended), he may have the honour of addressing himself as a friendly monitor and guide to other young travellers, who are upon the same road to learning and virtue; and have many dangers to encounter, from the fervour of youth, their own inexperience, and the overbearing influence of ill principles and bad examples.

Though some copies of these letters were gone out of his hands, and he was solicited by his friends to the publication, he lays no stress upon these considerations: his only motive is the desire of making an experiment for the benefit of youth; and if this little volume should be found capable of answering, in any degree, so desirable an end, it will be

accepted by such parents and teachers, as wish not only to cultivate the understanding of their scholars (which perhaps is their first object), but to secure them against the errors and miscarriages to which they are more particularly exposed in the present age and to such he begs leave to recommend it for their patronage and protection. If his design should meet with the approbation of those who are the proper judges, he may be encouraged to send abroad hereafter another volume upon the same plan.

REV. W. JONES'S LETTERS.

I.

ON A TEACHABLE DISPOSITION.

WOLFE instructed his soldiers, that if the French should land in Kent, as they were then expected to do, actual service in that enclosed country would show them the reason of several evolutions, which they had never been able to comprehend.* The soldier, therefore, submits to learn things of which he does not see the use. And is not every learner under the same obligation? If he desires to be taught, must not he bring with him that teachable disposition, which receives the rules and elements of learning implicitly, and trusts to the future for the knowledge of those reasons on which they are grounded? This is not a matter of choice: he can be taught on no other principle; for though the practice of a rule may seem very easy, the reason of that rule will generally lie too deep for a beginner;

* See General Wolfe's Instructions, p. 51. second edition.

and long experience will be necessary before it can be understood : indeed, there are many rules established, for which we have no reason but experience. If a learner will take his own judgment concerning the propriety of what is proposed to him, before he is capable of judging rightly, he will cheat himself, and preclude his future improvement : at best, he will lose a great deal of time, and go the farthest way about ; and, which is the greatest misfortune, he will contract bad habits in the beginning, and perhaps find himself unfit to be taught, when he would be glad to learn. I have seen some examples of young persons, who have been disappointed by trusting at first to their own shallow conceptions, and supposing, what is very pleasant in idea, that Nature may be a master before it has been a scholar. If the consequences of this error are so bad in arts, and sciences, and matters of accomplishment, they will be much worse in those things which relate to the economy of human life.

It is indeed a very dangerous mistake to imagine, that the mind can be cultivated, and the manners formed, on any principle but that of dependence ; and, therefore, we cannot sufficiently lament, that this wholesome and necessary doctrine is growing every day more and more out of fashion. Nothing is now to be taken upon authority. A wild and absurd system is prevailing, which encourages the depravity of nature, by admitting, that nothing is to be complied with by young people, of which they do not see the propriety : though it is morally impossible they should see it in many cases, till they look back upon the past time with eyes that are opened

by years and experience : and thus we are nursing up a spirit of petulance and mutiny, which can never fail to render the labour of cultivation very disagreeable to the teacher. Some parents, who, through a natural partiality, are willing to have it thought that their children are prodigies of forwardness and acuteness, consult their opinions, and argue with them, under a persuasion that their own reason will direct them, before they know the difference between good and evil. To argue with a child, who is to do as he is bid, is to take him out of his sphere, and to put him upon a level with his father. In some cases, where there is an unassuming quiet temper, this may possibly succeed : but with a mercurial disposition, the experiment is always dangerous : for what is the issue ? He is reasoned with : he reasons again, and, perhaps, though he has the wrong side of the question, he may possibly have the better of the argument in the hearing of others ; while the father, who is in the right, and ought in duty to persist, is silenced, and gives up the point, partly from vanity, and partly from affection. What can follow, but that the authority of the father will fall by degrees into contempt ? and what he loses in authority, the child will gain in conceit and impertinence, till he will do nothing without a reason, and seldom with ; for he thinks his own reasons better. As he grows up, he carries his impertinence with him into company, whom he interrupts, by giving his judgment on all occasions, and upon subjects, of which he has only so much knowledge as qualifies him to be troublesome. The case is very unhappy, if we consider it so far only as his conversation is concerned ; because wiser

people will find themselves disgusted with his company, and avoid it. But when this untutored confidence is extended to moral action, the consequences, which were disagreeable enough before, now become dreadful: and I fear it has been but too justly remarked, that the loose system of education adopted by some mistaken parents, on the recommendation of some enthusiastic philosophers, has produced a new generation of libertines, some of whom are such monsters of ignorance, insolence, and boundless profligacy, as never existed before in a Christian country. How far this observation may be applicable to the softer sex, it is not my business to inquire. Parents live to see the consequences of their mistake, when they can only lament the opportunity they have lost. Besides, the method is radically absurd and unnatural in itself; it is contrary to that rational order which does and must prevail in all other cases of the kind. The raw recruit learns his exercise, on the authority of his officer, because he knows nothing as yet of the art of war, and he waits for the reasons of it till he comes into action. The patient commits himself to the physician, consenting to a regimen which is against his appetites, and taking medicines, of which he knows neither the names nor the qualities; and while nature is ready to rebel at the taste of them. The Lacedemonians carried this doctrine to such excess, that they obliged their Ephori to submit to the ridiculous ceremony of being shaved when they entered upon their office, for no other end, but that it might be signified by this act, that they knew how to practise submission to the laws of their country. In short, it is an established and universal law, that

he who will gain any thing, must give up something; he that will improve his understanding, his manners, or his health, must contradict his will. This may be hard; but it is much harder to offer up wisdom, happiness, and perhaps even life itself, as a sacrifice to folly. So that after all the high flights and fancies of philosophic fanaticism, you may rest satisfied, there is no rule of education that has common sense in it, but the old-fashioned and almost exploded doctrine of authority on one side, and dependence on the other. He that will have liberty without discretion, will lose more than he gains: he will escape from the authority of others, to be devoted to his own ignorance, and enslaved by his own passions, which are the worst tyrants upon earth.

A gentleman appointed to a government abroad, consulted an eminent person, who was at that time the oracle of the law, as to the rule of his future conduct in his office, and begged his instructions. "I take you," said he, "for a man of integrity; and, therefore, the advice I must give you in general, is, to act in all cases according to the best of your judgment: however, I have this one rule to recommend; never give your reasons: you will gain no ground that way, and perhaps bring yourself into great difficulties by attempting it. Let your reasons be those of an honest man, and such as you can answer; but never expose them to your inferiors, who will be sure to have their reasons against yours; and while reason is litigated, authority is lost, and the public interest suffers." I mention the advice of this famous politician, to show you that the wisest of men, and the undoubted

friends of political liberty, are obliged in practice to adopt the principle which I have been explaining to you : so that when children resign themselves to the direction of their parents and tutors, who are bound by affection and interest to promote their happiness, and will take pleasure in showing them the reason of things at a proper season, they do but follow the example of all communities of men in the world, who are passive for their own good ; who are under laws, which not one in five hundred of them understands ; and submit to actions, of which they are not able to see either the propriety or the equity : and if children are treated as men are, no indignity is offered, and they have nothing to complain of. Your own sense will assure you, upon the whole, that society cannot subsist, nor any business go forward, without subordination ; and the experience of all ages will teach you, when you come to be better acquainted with it, that the dissolution of authority is the dissolution of society. In the mean time, consider the wisdom and happiness which is found among a swarm of bees ; a pattern to all human societies. There is perfect allegiance, perfect subordination : no time is lost in disputing or questioning ; but business goes forward with cheerfulness at every opportunity, and the great object is the common interest. All are armed for defence, and ready for work ; so that in every member of the community the two characters of the soldier and the labourer are united. If you look to the fruit of this wise economy, you find a store of honey for them to feed upon when the summer is past, and the days of labour are finished. Such, I hope, will be the fruit of your studies.

II.

ON GOOD MANNERS.

PROPRIETY of behaviour in company is necessary to every gentleman ; for, without good manners, he can neither be acceptable to his friends, nor agreeable in conversation to strangers.

The three sources of ill manners are pride, ill nature, and want of sense ; so that every person who is already endowed with humility, good nature, and good sense, will learn good manners with little or no teaching.

A writer, who had great knowledge of mankind, has defined good manners as *the art of making those people easy with whom we converse* ; and his definition cannot be mended. The ill qualities above-mentioned, all tend naturally to make people uneasy. Pride assumes all the conversation to itself, and makes the company insignificant. Ill nature makes offensive reflections ; and folly makes no distinction of persons and occasions. Good manners are therefore in part negative : let but a sensible person refrain from pride and ill nature, and his conversation will give satisfaction.

So far as good manners are positive, and related to good breeding, there are many established forms, which are to be learned by experience and conversation in the world. But there is one plain rule, worth all the rest added together ; that a person who pretends to the character and behaviour of a gentleman, should do every thing with *gentleness* ; with an easy, quiet, friendly manner, which doubles

the value of every word and action. A forward, noisy, importunate, overbearing way of talking, is the very quintessence of ill breeding: and hasty contradiction, unseasonable interruption of persons in their discourse, especially of elders or superiors, loud laughter, winkings, grimaces, and affected contortions of the body, are not only of low extraction in themselves, but are the natural symptoms of self-sufficiency and impudence.

It is a sign of great ignorance to talk much to other people, of things in which they have no interest; and to be speaking familiarly by name of distant persons, to those who have no knowledge of them. It shows that the ideas are comprehended within a very narrow sphere, and that the memory has but few objects.

If you speak of any thing remarkable in its way, many inconsiderable people have a practice of telling you something of the same kind, which they think much more remarkable. If any person in the company is commended for what they do, they will be instantly telling you of somebody else whom they know, who does it much better; and thus a modest person, who meant to entertain, is disappointed and confounded by another's rudeness. True gentility, when improved by good sense, avoids every appearance of self-importance; and polite humility takes every opportunity of giving importance to the company; of which it may be truly said, as it was of worldly wealth, "it is better to give than to receive." In our commerce with mankind, we are always to consider, that *their* affairs are of more concern to *them*, than our's are; and we should treat them on this principle, unless we are occasionally questioned, and directed to our-

selves by the turn of the conversation. Discretion will always fix on some subject in which the company have a common share. Talk not of music to a physician, nor of medicine to a fiddler; unless the fiddler should be sick, and the physician at a concert. He that speaks only of such subjects as are familiar to himself, treats his company as the stork did the fox, presenting an entertainment to him in a deep pitcher, out of which no creature could feed but a long-billed fowl.

The rules I have laid down are such as take place chiefly in our conversation with strangers: among friends and acquaintance, where there is freedom and pleasantry, daily practice will be attended with less reserve. But here let me give you warning, that too great familiarity, especially if attended with roughness and importunity, is always dangerous to friendship, which must be treated with some degree of tenderness and delicacy, if you wish it to be lasting. You are to keep your friend by the same behaviour that first won his esteem: and observe this, as a maxim verified by daily experience—that men advance themselves more commonly by the lesser arts of discretion, than by the more valuable endowments of wit and science; which, without discretion to recommend them, are often left to disappointment and beggary.

The earl of Chesterfield has given many directions, which have been much admired of late years; but his rules are calculated to form the *petit maitre*, the debauchee, or the insidious politician, with whom it would be totally unprofitable, and even dangerous, to converse. My late friend, the learned Dr. Delany, at the end of his anonymous *Observa-*

tions on Lord Orrery's Remarks, published a short original discourse of Swift on Good Manners, which contains more to the purpose in one page of it, than you will find in the whole volume of the courtly earl, so highly applauded by ignorant people for his knowledge of the world.

We are apt to look upon good manners as a lighter sort of qualification, lying without the system of morality and Christian duty ; which a man may possess or not possess, and yet be a very good man. But there is no foundation for such an opinion : the apostle St. Paul hath plainly comprehended it in his well-known description of *charity*, which signifies the *friendship of Christians*, and is extended to so many cases, that no man can practise that virtue, and be guilty of ill manners. Show me the man, who in his conversation discovers no signs that he is *puffed up* with pride ; who never behaves himself *unseemly*, or with impropriety* ; who neither *envies* nor censures ; who is *kind* and *patient* toward his friends ; who *seeketh not his own*, but considers others rather than himself, and gives them the preference ; I say, that man is not only all that we intend by a gentleman, but much more : he really is, what all artificial courtesy affects to be, a philanthropist, a friend to mankind ; whose company will delight while it improves, and whose good will rarely be evil spoken of. Christianity, therefore, is the best foundation of what we call good manners ; and of two persons, who have equal knowledge of the world, he that is the best Christian will be the best gentleman.

* *Ασχημονως.*

III.

ON TEMPERANCE.

A HEALTHY body and a sedate mind are blessings, without which, this life, considered in itself, is little better than a punishment: and you should reflect on this while you are young, before intemperance has brought you into bondage; for it will be too late to persuade, when the judgment is depraved and weakened by ill habits. The epicure, by attempting to make too much of this life, shortens its period, and lessens its value. Instead of being the life of a man, it is scarcely so much as the life of a beast; for most beasts know when to be satisfied.

I have been led into these reflections by seeing in the newspapers the death of Gulosus, a country gentleman in the west of England, a man of good parts, a friendly disposition, and agreeable conversation. He was naturally of a strong constitution, and might have lasted to a good old age; but he is gone before his time, through an error in opinion, which has destroyed more than the sword. The sports of the field, to which he was much addicted, procured him a great appetite; and by the favour of a neighbour, who had the merit of keeping a full table, he had daily opportunities of gratifying it at an easy rate. He asked a friend, how much port a man might drink without hurting himself? This question was put to a valetudinarian, who gave it as his private opinion, that a pint in a day was

more than would do any man good. "There," says he, "you and I differ; for I am convinced that one bottle after dinner will never hurt any man that uses exercise." Under this persuasion, he persevered in his custom of eating and drinking as much as he could; though the excess of one day obliged him to take a large dose of rhubarb the next; so that his life was a continual struggle between fulness and physic, till nature was wearied out, and he sunk all at once, at the age of forty, under the stroke of an apoplexy. When nature fails in a strong man, the change is often very sudden. I, who am obliged to live by rule, and am hitherto alive beyond hope, have seen the end of many younger and stronger men, who have unhappily presumed upon their strength, and have persevered in a constant habit of eating and drinking without any reserve, till their digestive powers have failed, and their whole constitution has been shattered; so that either death, or incurable infirmity, has been the consequence.

What can be the reason, why the French people are so much less troubled with distempers, and are so much more lively in their spirits, than the English? A gentleman of learning, with whom I had the pleasure of conversing at Paris, made this observation on the subject: "You English people give no rest to your faculties: you take three meals every day, and live in constant fulness, without any relief: thus nature is overcharged, crudities are accumulated in the vessels of the body, and you fall early into apoplexies, palsies, insanity, or hopeless stupidity. Whereas, if we are guilty of any excess, our meagre days, which are two in a week, bring us

into order again ; and if these should be insufficient, the season of Lent comes in to our relief, which is pretty sure to answer the purpose."

It is much to be lamented, and we are suffering for it in mind and body, that in these latter days of the reformation, we have been so dreadfully afraid of superstition, that we have at length discarded every wholesome and necessary regulation ; and because we do not whip our skins, like the monks of antiquity, we stuff them till they burst. The consumption of animal food in England is by far too great for the enjoyment of health, and the public good of the community. The price of provisions becomes much more unreasonable ; our fishery is neglected ; and no one benefit arises, but that of putting money into the pockets of physicians and lawyers ; which they never fail to do, who, with constant fulness, are sick in their bodies, and quarrelsome in their tempers. The calendar of the church of England, which is moderate enough in its restrictions, would be of infinite service to us, if it were duly observed. I once met with a wise and good man, far advanced in years, and of an infirm constitution, who assured me he neither used nor wanted any other physician. If we were to adopt his rule, nature would have that seasonable relief which is necessary ; our health and our spirits would be better ; suicide, a growing and tremendous evil, would be less frequent ; our fishery would have better encouragement—a matter of no small weight to a maritime people, whose navigation is their natural defence ; provisions would be cheaper ; the nation in general would be wiser ; and perhaps we should also have a better claim to the blessing

of Heaven, if we showed a more pious regard to the wholesome regulations of the Christian church; which are now so shockingly neglected, that our feasts and merry-meetings are on Wednesdays and Fridays (perhaps on Good-Friday itself), when our forefathers of the reformation, who kept up to what they professed, were praying and fasting.

The time hath come upon many great nations, when ill principles and self indulgence, and that infatuation which is the natural consequence of both, have brought them to ruin; and in all appearance that time is now coming upon us. I am persuaded we have sunk more hastily into universal corruption, from the sanctified fastings of our Puritans in the days of Cromwell—whose rapine and violence, when compared with their affected mortifications, brought a scandal upon all the forms and appearances of religion. Yet such has been our destiny, that while we have dropped the most religious of their practices, we have taken up with the worst of their principles, and are now suffering under the natural effects of them.

IV.

ON DIVERSIONS.

It is laid down as a principle of action by most young people of fortune, that there is no enjoyment of life without diversion: and this is now carried to such excess, that pleasure seems to be the great object which has taken place of every other. The mistake is very unhappy, as I intend to show, by

taking the other side of the question, and proving that there is no enjoyment of life without work.

The words commonly used to signify play, are these four—relaxation, diversion, amusement, and recreation. The idea of relaxation is taken from a bow, which must be unbent when it is not wanted, to keep up its spring: diversion signifies a turning aside from the main purpose of a journey, to see something that is curious and out of the way: amusement means an occasional forsaking of the Muses, when a student lays aside his books: recreation is the refreshing of the spirits when they are exhausted with labour, so that they may be ready in due time to resume it again. From these considerations, it follows, that the idle man, who has no work, can have no play; for how can he be relaxed who is never bent? how can he turn out of the road, who is never in it? how can he leave the Muses, who is never with them? how can play refresh him, who is never exhausted with business?

When diversion becomes the business of life, its nature is changed. All rest presupposes labour; and the bed is refreshing to a weary man: but when a man is confined to his bed, he is miserable, and wishes himself out of it. He that has no variety can have no enjoyment; he is surfeited with pleasure, and, in the better hours of reflection, would find a refuge in labour itself. And, indeed, I apprehend there is not a more miserable, as well as a more worthless being, than a young man of fortune who has nothing to do but to find some new way of doing nothing. A sentence is passed upon all poor men, that if they do not work they shall not eat; and it takes effect, in part, against the rich, who,

if they are not useful, in some respect, to the public, are pretty sure to become burthensome to themselves. This blessing goes along with every useful employment; it keeps a man upon good terms with himself, and consequently in good spirits, and in a capacity of pleasing, and being pleased with every innocent gratification. As labour is necessary to procure an appetite to the body, there must also be some previous exercise of the mind to prepare it for enjoyment; indulgence on any other terms is false in itself, and ruinous in its consequences; mirth degenerates into senseless riot, and gratification soon terminates in corruption.

If we compare the different lots of mankind, we shall find that happiness is much more equally distributed than we are apt to think, when we judge by outward appearance. The industrious poor have, in many respects, more enjoyment of life than the idler sort of gentry, who, by their abuse of liberty and wealth, fall into temptations and snares; and in the immoderate pursuit of imaginary pleasures, find nothing in the end but real bitterness. The remedy of all is in this short sentence: "to be useful, is to be happy." If Eugenio had followed the profession for which his father intended him, he might now have been alive, and a happy member of society: but his father dying when he was young, he used his liberty (as he called it), and threw himself upon the world as a man of leisure with a small fortune. His idleness exposed him to bad company, who were idle like himself; they led him into extravagance; extravagance led him to gambling, as a last resort for the repairing of his fortune; but it had a contrary

effect, and completed his ruin : his disappointments made him quarrelsome, and a quarrel brought on a duel, in which he lost his life at five-and-twenty. In this short account of Eugenio you have the history of many young men of this age, who are bewitched with the ideas of liberty and pleasure ; but with this difference—that some are destroyed by others, and some destroy themselves.

The progress is much the same with a nation as with an individual : when they rise from poverty, activity, and industry, to improvement, ease, and elegance, they sink into indolence and luxury, which bring on a fever and delirium ; till having quarrelled among themselves, and turned their swords against one another, they fall by a sort of political suicide, or become a prey to some foreign enemy.

V.

ON NOVELS.

WHEN you read for amusement, let your mind be turned as much as possible to the real transactions of human life, as they are represented and commented upon by wise and faithful historians ; and beware of throwing away your time, as too many now do, by giving yourself up to trifling works of imagination, of which there is a deluge in the present age, to the subversion of common sense, and the general corruption of our principles and morals.

While I was in the shop of a sensible bookseller in the country, a young man presented himself, who came for some volumes of a novel. As soon as he had turned his back, "Sir," said the bookseller, "our trade is now, in a manner, reduced to this one article of letting out novels: that young man has read half the novels in my collection; and when he has finished his studies, by reading the other half, the ignorance he brought into my shop would have done him more good than the knowledge he will carry out of it." Many other occurrences have led me to reflect on this fashion, which has increased so much of late years, as nearly to swallow up all other reading—like the lean kine of Pharaoh, which swallowed up all the fat ones, and did not look the better for it.

Consider, therefore, before your judgment is corrupted, that most novels are exceedingly lean in their matter, to say the best of them: many of them are the cold productions of people who write for the fashion (with as much indifference as milliners make caps), without any materials worth communicating. Others are the offspring of a rambling fancy, which puts together a string of incidents, not one degree above the tea-table, and of no more real concern than if they were to hold you by the ears, as some tiresome people do, with an account of their dreams: indeed, many of them are but the waking dreams of those who know neither the world nor themselves. Many of them also are mean imitations, which affect the style and manner of more successful compositions. Some of them are void of all regular design, and made up of

heterogeneous parts, which have no dependence upon one another.

—— late qui splendeat unus et alter
Assuitur pannus ——

And thus they become like the party-coloured jacket of a fool upon the stage of a mountebank, who sets the rabble a-gape with the low and insipid wonders he has collected, to detain them in his company, and draw the money out of their pockets.

It were well if the reading of novels were nothing worse than the loss of time and money, though this is bad enough ; but young people will not escape so : it has generally a bad effect upon the mind, and, in some instances, a fatal effect upon the morals and fortune. In novels, plays, and romances (for they have all the same general object, which is amusement), good and evil are disguised by false colourings and unjust representations : the end is to please ; and how is this end to be obtained ? Nothing will please loose people but intrigues and loose adventures ; nothing will please the unlettered profligate but blasphemous sneers upon religion and the Holy Scriptures ; nothing will please the vicious but the palliation of vice and the contempt of virtue : therefore, novelists and comic writers, who study popularity, either for praise or profit, mix up vice with amiable qualities, to cover and recommend it ; while virtue is compounded with such ingredients, as have a natural tendency to make it odious. These tricks are put upon the public every day, and they take those for their benefactors who thus impose upon them.

But novels vitiate the taste, while they corrupt the manners : through a desire of captivating the imagination, they fly above nature and reality ; their characters are all overcharged, and their incidents boil over with improbabilities and absurdities. The imagination, thus fed with wind and flatulence, loses its relish for truth, and can bear nothing that is ordinary : so that the reading of novels is to the mind, what dram-drinking is to the body ; the palate is vitiated, the stomach is squeamish, the juices are corrupted, the digestion is spoiled, and life can be kept up only by that which is supernatural and violent. The gamester, who accustoms himself to violent agitations, can find no pleasure unless his passions are all kept upon the stretch, like the rigging of a ship in a storm : his amusement is in racks, tortures, and even madness itself : and such is the taste of those who habituate their imaginations to the flights and extravagances of modern romances.

It is a certain proof that a nation is become degenerate in sense, in learning, in economy, in morals, and in religion, when they are running thus after shadows, and neglecting all that is useful and valuable in life. The polite author of the *Travels of Cyrus*, describing the state of the Medes when their empire was declining, gives a lively picture of that literary corruption which is the never-failing attendant upon luxury and a dissolution of morals : “ Solid knowledge was looked upon as contrary to delicacy of manners ; agreeable trifling, fine-spun thoughts, and lively sallies of imagination, were the only kinds of wit admired there : no sort of writing pleased but amusing fictions ; where a perpetual

succession of events surprised by their variety, without improving the understanding, or ennobling the heart."

I have sometimes been struck with the reflection, that few writers, who forge a series of events, look upon their attempt in a serious light, and consider the hazard of the undertaking; how they are in continual danger of giving us false notions of the consequences of human actions, and of misrepresenting the ways of Divine Providence; for the ways of men, so far as they are passive under the consequences of their own actions, are the ways of God. When we confine ourselves to real life, and are content with describing facts, with the consequences that actually followed them, we may be unable to trace the designs of Providence—but then we do not misrepresent them; and the time will come when God will be justified in all those complicated events, which we are unable now to reconcile with the known laws of justice and goodness. But when we dare to settle the fate of imaginary characters, we take the providence of God out of his hands, assuming an office for which no man is fit, and in which he cannot miscarry without some danger to himself and others. For example—a writer may even mean well, and yet, through shortsightedness and mistake, may bring virtue into distress, under such circumstances, as Providence, perhaps, never did nor will, and thereby may bring discouragements upon virtue, and even throw it into despair; he may give to vice that success which it never had, nor will have, so long as God governs the world.

To counterbalance this danger, lord Bacon observes, that, "in works of imagination there is liberty of representing virtue and vice in their proper colours, with their proper rewards; and to correct, as it were, the common course of things, and satisfy the principles of justice, by which the mind of a reader is influenced." In this respect, works of genius have an advantage above real history, and may be admitted, provided the writer himself is of sound judgment, and influenced by principles of truth and justice.

If, when you have weighed these things together, you should suspect that I have been too nice and severe, consider that it is better to err on the side of caution and prudence; and that I may say for myself, what the apostle said upon a like occasion, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy."

Upon the whole, life is a serious thing, and all events are at God's disposal; and as the good and evil of this world, transient and momentary as it is, stands connected with the good and evil of the next, which is perpetual, it is dangerous to trifle with it, as they are tempted to do, who address themselves only to the passions of men, without having any principles of truth and justice to restrain them.

I do not say, that you should abstain from all fiction, as such; for there is much profitable fiction. I could name several things which you may read in this way with safety and improvement: *Gil Blas* is a romance of the first class, in excellent French, distinguished by many capital strokes of good sense and original wit; the narrative of *Rolando*, the

captain of the robbers, when we consider the character and profession of the person who delivers it, is one of the highest-wrought satires upon the follies of parental indulgence in education that is any where to be met with. I mean, therefore, to give you warning, that as fiction is now managed in plays and novels, it is proper to be upon your guard against it. And let me caution you against all such productions of wit as make too free with religion, even with the errors of it : the mind, by sporting with great subjects, will be accustomed to make dishonourable associations, and to lose much of that seriousness and veneration which is due to things of eternal moment. I question whether any man can read Swift's Tale of a Tub, or Don Quixote's Visions, without finding himself the worse for it. In regard to all such indiscreet applications of wit, every young student may guard his mind and rectify his judgment, by reading Mr. Collier's View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage ; a book, which brought Dryden himself to repentance, and does indeed beggar every work upon the same argument : it is the triumph of wit over scurrility ; of piety over profaneness ; of learning over ignorance ; and of Christianity over atheism.

There is a practice common with our fabulists, moralists, and romance writers, which is contrary to fact and nature, and therefore is absurd in itself, while it is disrespectful and injurious to true religion, though it wonderfully captivates the fancy of some people, who admire what is exotic, without considering whether it is reasonable. Our writers

have a favourite practice of recommending wisdom and morality, and many admirable virtues, to Christian readers, in a Turkish dress ; but is it not dishonest to give to the Koran the honour of those sentiments, and that illumination, which the author himself derived from a higher source ? It ought to raise our indignation to see the imagery, eloquence, and purity of the Scripture, giving dignity to the antichristian spirit of Mahometan infidels. This is an offence of the same kind with what some learned critics have supposed to have been prohibited under the terms of the third commandment, “ Thou shalt not apply the name of God to a vanity, that is, to a heathen idol.” For it seems not much less injurious to take the pure and exalted doctrines of the Christian philosophy, and put them into the mouths of narrow-minded, barbarous, bigotted, malicious, illiterate Mussulmen, by supposing them to talk and moralize in the superior strain of a well-informed Christian ; and to invigorate their speech with the powers of learning, like classical scholars who have studied oratory and elegance all their lives—though the Turk is a professed enemy to literature. This plan exposes us to another inconvenience ; that if we speak in character, we must speak with veneration of the religion of Mahomet, and call it “ our most holy faith ;” and the impostor who invented it must be “ our holy prophet ;” which, though it is but fiction, yet such is the weakness of the human mind, and the force of custom, that we may tell lies, or hear them told, till we believe them ; and speak respectfully of Mahomet, till we think but meanly of the Gospel.

The Adventurer has great merit as a work of moral instruction and entertainment, and may be read with great advantage by young persons who would be aware of the ways of the world, and the snares that are laid to ruin innocence : in many respects the Adventurer is superior to the Spectator, and the author seems to have written with an excellent intention ; but he has too frequently indulged that idle humour of laying his scenes upon Turkish ground, and conveying his precepts in Turkish attire.

The lives of men famous in their generation, as saints, martyrs, scholars, philosophers, soldiers ; and of those who were singularly infamous, as impostors, thieves, murderers, tyrants, usurpers, &c. if faithfully represented, will instruct while they entertain, and exhibit good and evil, in their true colours, to much better effect than the thin-spun, long-winded letters of Richardson, the incoherent ramblings of Sterne, or the low scenes of Smollett, &c. which leave behind them but little worth retaining.

VI.

ON THE USE OF MATHEMATICAL LEARNING.

A YOUNG member of the university of Oxford, being directed by his tutor to the study of Euclid's Elements with the rest of his class, remonstrated against it to his companions as a useless undertaking : " What," said he, " does the man think my father intends me for a carpenter ?" Many other

scholars of more wit than experience are under the same mistake : they think the mathematical sciences are of no benefit, but to those who are to make either a practical or a professional use of them. It must be owned, that their application to the business of life is chiefly in mechanics, astronomy, navigation, perspective, the military arts of fortifying and attacking of places, surveying of land, and the like. And where would be the harm, if a gentleman of fortune, who has leisure to know every thing, should know some of these things ? But the use of mathematical learning is by no means confined to practical arts and necessary computations : it is eminently serviceable to improve and strengthen the intellectual faculties, and render them more fit for every kind of speculation. Geometry is a sort of logic, wherein quantities are the objects of argumentation : and the method of arguing is so strict, that the order of a demonstration cannot be followed without that unremitting attention, which, when it once becomes habitual to the mind, will be transferred to all other subjects ; the memory will be better able on every occasion to assist the judgment in comparing what went before with what comes after, and thence deducing a conclusion with precision. Logic teaches the art of deducing some third proposition from the comparison of two others, in a syllogism : but a geometrical demonstration being frequently a series of such syllogisms, habituates the understanding to a more orderly arrangement of complicated ideas ; for if the order is broken, the proof is deficient. Method is of the first importance in all subjects, to give a discourse the two excellences of force and perspicuity ; and

no practice is so proper to communicate this art of methodizing as the forms of reasoning in geometry. We have a remarkable instance of the efficacy of this practice in the theological writings of Dr. Barrow, to whose skill in geometry it may be imputed, in great measure, that he has divided and disposed his subjects with so much art and judgment, as to exhaust their matter, and render them intelligible in every part.

But even to omit this analogical use of geometry, the science is necessary in itself to give an understanding of many things, which ought to be known by men of a liberal education. Geography can be understood but very imperfectly without it : and the arts of projection, which teach us how to represent the face of the world in perspective, are as entertaining as they are useful. Every curious mind must be delighted with the operations of trigonometry, which enables us to measure with certainty such quantities and distances as are inaccessible ; which to an ignorant person seems impossible, as if there were some magic in the work : but it is the general object of all mathematical reasoning, from known quantities to find others that are unknown, by means of certain relations subsisting between them.

There is scarcely any thing in nature more wonderful to a contemplative person, and more worthy to be studied, than the effect of certain proportions in the theory of music, which can never be examined and understood without some knowledge of the doctrine concerning the composition and resolution of ratios, a curious and useful branch of the mathematics. Pythagoras was so captivated with

the mathematical sections of a musical string, and their practical application to some other arts, that he is reported to have exhorted his disciples, as he lay upon his death-bed, to study the monochord : and all this, as a matter of contemplation ; for the improvement and enlargement of the mind is worth the attention of a scholar, though he never intends to strike a note of music all the days of his life. How ignorant, and even barbarous, would it be in a gentleman of education to remonstrate, that all this is nothing to him, because his father did not intend him for a fiddler !

In philosophy, especially under the present state of it, the use of mathematical learning is unquestionable. What gentleman of taste would not envy sir George Shuckburgh for his late learned labours upon the Alps, where he had the opportunity of trying so many curious experiments, by an application of the present theory of that useful instrument, the barometer, as improved by Mr. De Luc ? But no gentleman can be qualified to amuse himself and serve the public in that way, without some considerable skill in calculation, the experiments being very intricate, and abounding with niceties which must be accurately understood and attended to.

A course of the most ingeniously contrived experiments on the velocity of projectiles, and the resistance of the air to bodies moving swiftly in it, were invented by the late Mr. Robins the engineer, which for their elegance are by no means beneath the admiration of a scholar, who will never repent of the labour necessary for understanding them. They have been farther carried on very lately from small arms to ordnance by Dr. Hutton, a member of

the Royal Society. Whatever the value of these experiments may be in themselves (and they are chiefly valuable to military artists) they have had at least one good effect, in which all men of literature have an interest ; they have given occasion to a discourse from the late worthy president, sir John Pringle, which, for its learning, curiosity, elegance of style, and propriety of oratory, must be admired by all judges as a pattern in that kind of writing.

Now I have carried you thus far into the uses of mathematical learning, let me warn you against the danger we are under from the abuses of it. Mankind are very ingenious in using things, and they are almost as ingenious in abusing them. That great and good man, bishop Berkley, brought a heavy charge against the mathematicians of his age : first, because they deviated wantonly, and with some perplexity and apparent contradiction, into a boundless field of useless subtilties ; and secondly, because many of them were found to be ill-affected to the greatest subjects of religion, which are infinitely more important in human life. It has been said, that he carried the matter too far, and laid himself open to the criticisms of his adversaries : but he had too much learning and too much acuteness to make himself ridiculous in the management of any argument. There was some foundation of truth in what he advanced : for if the mind is not upon its guard, a mathematician is disposed to look for that sort of sensible demonstration in other subjects, which is to be found only when we reason about quantities ; and therefore he rejects much truth with a high hand, as if it were deficient in point of evidence ; which is unreasonable and absurd. I

am as perfectly convinced, that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, and that he was murdered in the capitol at Rome, as I am that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones : but I am not convinced upon the same kind of evidence ; I cannot prove it by lines and angles. What then ? I can no more doubt of the one than of the other : but I believe the one on visible descriptive evidence, depending upon certain axioms, or undeniable truths relating to quantities : and I believe the other on undeniable testimony, and the coins subsisting every where at this day, which bear his image and superscription ; as also by his writings, which no man living was able to forge. I must therefore believe that there really was such a person, or I could soon show you, that I must believe something more incredible ; and that would be just as irrational as to deny a geometrical proposition with its own proper evidence.

The ingenious Mr. Robins above mentioned, who, as a mathematician, a dexterous experimentalist, and a writer of a clear and classical style, was equal to most men living, was so unaccountably wild in his reasonings on some other subjects, that I have been told, he held the doctrine of future punishment to be a fable, because he could not see a *soul burned at Charing-cross* : as if the Scripture could not be true, because it is not a book of geometry ; or there could be no future state, because we cannot prove it by an air-pump. De Moivre, another eminent mathematician, who left France as a protestant refugee, is said to have derided himself afterwards for leaving his country to preserve his religion, which he lost past recovery when he

had been some time in England. I had occasion once to inquire after a great proficient in mathematical learning, whose works I had seen while I had no knowledge of his person. My bookseller at London, of whom I inquired, gave me a particular account of him ; adding to the rest, that he was a true mathematician, for he was a great reprobate, and every word he spoke was attended with an oath. I mention this, to show, that a notion had gone abroad, whether justly or not, that the generality of mathematicians are disposed, as such, to irreligion and profaneness. Two reasons may be given for this, supposing it to be true. The mathematics are open to students who have not had the advantages of a liberal education, and want the assistance of collateral learning to open their minds, and keep them within the bounds of truth and modesty : and as the fashion of the last and present age, with the fame so justly attributed to our great Newton, have placed the mathematical sciences so much higher than they used to be in the scale of literature, students who excel in them are under a temptation, incident to us all, to over-rate themselves and their knowledge. Thus they fall into vanity, pedantry, narrow-mindedness, and scepticism ; neglecting, and even despising all other learning, which is equally, and, in some respects, more valuable, for improving the heart and rectifying the judgment : ignorant of things with which they are most intimately concerned ; and placing all their pride in a sort of learning, to the exercise of which, perhaps, they will never be called, when they come forth into the business of life.

One thing I would whisper in the ear of scepti-

cism before I quit the present subject, which is this ; that the more a man knows, the farther he sees into truth : as he sees farther into truth, the objects of his belief will be continually increasing ; and, therefore, *doubting*, as such, is not a sign of wisdom : as he advances in knowledge, he will find by experience that he doubted from ignorance.

VII.

ON READING AND PRONUNCIATION.

You are sensible we have taken some pains, and with good reason, in the practice of reading with propriety. It is a matter of the last importance in education, though too generally neglected : in public schools it is seldom thought of. Several years are spent in charging the memory with words, while few days are employed in forming the voice and judgment to utter them in a powerful and agreeable manner.

A scholar may be such in theory, when his head is stored with languages, and he can interpret the writings of the Greeks and Romans ; but he is no scholar in practice, till he can express his own sentiments in a good style, and speak them in a proper manner. A mathematician understands the rationale of musical sounds ; but the musician, who charms the ear, and touches the passions, is he who can combine sounds agreeably, according to the rules of art in composition, and perform them well upon an instrument. The dead philosophy of music

in the head of a mathematician is like the learning of a Greek and Latin scholar, who can neither write nor read; and there are many such to be found.

There are two great faults in reading which people fall into naturally; and there is another fault which is the work of art, as bad, in my opinion, as either of the former: it is common with those who are untaught, or ill taught, or have a bad ear, to read in a lifeless insipid tone, without any of those artificial turnings of the voice which give force and grace to what is delivered. When a boy takes a book into his hand, he quits his natural speech, and either falls into a whining canting tone, or assumes a stiff and formal manner, which has neither life nor meaning. Observe the same boy when he is at play with his companions, disputing, reasoning, accusing, or applauding, and you will hear him utter all his words with the flexures which are proper to the occasion, as nature and passion, and the matter dictates. Why does he not read as forcibly as he speaks? This he would soon do, if he were to consider, that reading is but another sort of talking. He that reads, talks out of a book; and he that talks, reads without book; this is all the difference: therefore let a boy consider with himself, how he would talk what he is reading, and then he will drop the formal tone he had assumed, and pronounce easily and naturally.

The sense of a passage depends so much on the emphasis with which it is uttered, that if you read without emphasis, the matter is dead and uninteresting: if you lay it on the wrong word, you alter the sense. Trite examples have been given of sen-

tences which have as many meanings as words when the emphasis is differently placed. Thus, if the question were asked, *Do you ride to London to-day?* Place the accent on the first word, the sense is, *Do you; or do you not?* If you place it on the second, it means, *Do you go yourself; or does somebody else go for you?* Lay it on the third, it means, *Do you go on horseback, or on foot, &c.?* On the fourth, it asks, whether you go *so far as London, or only part of the way?* On the fifth, it is, *do you ride to London, or to some other place?* If you lay it on the two last, it asks, whether you go there *to-day, or at some other time?*

This example is sufficient to show, that you must understand the meaning of a sentence before you can pronounce it right; and that if you pronounce it wrong, the meaning cannot be understood by another person. To hear any one reading in a single unvaried note or monotone, without expressing the sense, is like looking upon a right line which has no variety of flexure to entertain the eye; and if he reads with a false emphasis, he makes the sense absurd and ridiculous. Many instances have been reported to illustrate this absurdity. They tell us of a reader, who in delivering that passage of Scripture from the reading desk, "He said unto them, saddle the ass, and they saddled him," unfortunately laid the accent on the last word; by which the sentence was made to signify, that the man was saddled instead of his beast.

The want of art and skill, especially in a matter where it is of real consequence, is unpardonable in a person of a liberal education: but it is equally offensive to read with too much art. *Nequid nimis*,

is to be observed here as in other cases. Affectation is disgusting wherever it is to be found ; it betrays a want of judgment in the speaker, and none ever admire it but the illiterate, who are not prepared to make proper distinctions. We are never more justly offended, than when an attempt is made to surprise us with unreasonable rant, with grimace and distortion, and such other emotions as are not justified by the matter delivered, and destroy the effect of it with those who have judgment to see through the artifice. When a speaker seems to expect that I should be surprised, and I am not ; when he shows me, that he is endeavouring to lead my passions where they cannot follow, it occasions a very disagreeable sensation. Affectation, though it is always out of place, and seldom fails to defeat its own intentions, is never more so than when it appears in the pulpit or the reading desk ; where it is shocking to see the airs of the theatre, and to hear a preacher enforcing his observations with the voice of an actress expiring upon the stage.

What is unnatural cannot be just ; and nothing can be affecting which is not natural. Therefore, in all reading, we must have regard to the sense, to the matter, and the occasion : then we shall read with propriety, and what we deliver will have the proper effect.

One rule ought never to be forgotten ; that the reader or speaker should seem to feel in himself what he delivers to others ; *si vis me flere, dolendum est ipsi tibi*. The principle is certain, and even mechanical ; for in all machines, no part moves another, without being first moved itself. This is the soul of all elocution, with which a common

beggar at a door has the powers of an orator, and without which, all the rules of art are cold and insignificant. A barrel-organ can be made to play a most elaborate piece of music truly and correctly; but the sounds want that animation which they receive from the finger of a living player, who is himself delighted with what he is performing.

For practice in reading, a plain narrative has not variety enough to exercise the different turns of the voice: speeches, reasonings, controversies, and dialogues are more proper; and there is great choice in the Scriptures. The speeches of St. Paul to Agrippa, Festus, and the Jews; his reasonings in the epistle to the Romans; the conversation of the Jews with the man that was born blind—are all excellent to teach propriety and force of expression. Some of the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young are so difficult, that they cannot be expressed without some study and a perfect understanding of the sense; but when understood, they will contribute much to farther improvement. I am cautious of recommending speeches in plays; not only because the matter is too often corrupting, but because there is danger of falling from thence into an affected over-strained manner, which is always to be avoided.

The prose pieces of Swift are so correct and humorous, and are stored with such variety of speech, reasoning, and dialogue, that they cannot be read without advantage; and therefore I would recommend them to your perusal for this purpose. In a future letter I shall give you some advice about style and composition.

VIII.

ON STYLE.

By a style in writing we mean that language in which an author expresses the matter he is writing upon; and a good style is constituted by proper words in proper places.

A complete sentence is called a period; which consists of several members or clauses, and those members are composed of single words. Short periods are fit for light and familiar compositions, as epistles and dialogues. Long periods are proper to more grave and stately discourses, as set speeches, historical narrations, and moral or theological essays. It is a great point of art, and requires much experience, to accommodate the length and form of a period to the matter treated of, or the particular passion to which the writer addresses himself. These are niceties which I shall not dwell upon, as belonging more properly to the figures of rhetoric: but give you, instead of them, this general rule; that no period ought to be so long, or so complicated, as to be obscure; for darkness in language, like the darkness of the night, takes away the sight of all objects, so that they are without effect, however great and excellent they may be in themselves. To avoid this evil, be sure that you understand the connexion of what you say, and forbear to embarrass your sentences with frequent and impertinent parentheses, which happen only because your ideas are not regularly disposed in your mind

when you commit them to paper. You must also be clear in the grammar of your expressions ; for false grammar defiles a sentence, and admits of no apology. The best word you can use to denote any thing, is that word which is applied to it in the common conversation of those who speak correctly in their own language. If there is a native English word for your purpose, always use it in preference to one of Greek or Roman extraction. You cannot imagine how the sense of any discourse is weakened by superfluous words, unnecessary epithets, and far-fetched expressions. Nothing but pedantry and affectation can tempt you to use *debility* instead of weakness : *stolidity* for foolishness ; or *puerility* for childishness ; unless perhaps, on some occasions, when we are driven to a variety of terms to avoid the poverty of repetition. A curious choice of fine words, for the embellishment of our diction upon a common subject, is as disgusting as an affected theatrical air in pronounciation, and is analogous to a foppishness of appearance in our persons : the fop shows you, that he means to be more than a gentleman, and the affected writer would be something more than a scholar. I cannot help being pleased and edified with Mr. Hervey's *Meditations* among the Tombs, where the attention is kept up by the disposition of the scenery, and the choice of the matter, which is forcibly and pathetically expressed ; but I find myself often hurt by the introduction of some fine word where a plain one would have done better, and would have been more proper to the solemnity of the occasion. In some other of his *Meditations*, where the matter is not so striking, and more thinly spread, the pedantry is unpar-

donable, and the affectation altogether surfeiting, though his manner is greatly admired by persons of little judgment.

If the mind is sincere, it cannot be hunting for curious terms while it is impressed with deep sentiments, which will never fail to bring their words with them. When the mind is at the same time greatly and impertinently employed, it will be under the like suspicion with an actress upon the stage, who is seen to be solicitous about the plaits of her clothes, while she is uttering sentiments of horror and despair.

Let me also caution you against pedantic innovations in your *spelling*, which some writers are attempting to introduce amongst us. There are instances where a reformation in this respect may be reasonable and proper; but I have seen many improvements which are improper and absurd, because our derivatives have come down to us from the Latin through the medium of French, and cannot be reduced to the Latin itself without violence. If the principle should be admitted, whither will it carry us? If you write *florish* instead of *flourish*, because it comes from *floreo*, then you ought also to write *flore*, instead of *flower*, because it comes from *flos*, which has no *w* in it.

A style easy, pleasant, correct, and properly adorned, is of great value, because it gives life and beauty to every subject it sets forth. It is like the rich and improved soil of a garden, which adds to the size and form of every vegetable planted in it. How much less interesting are the actions of Cæsar, when Hirtius has the telling of them! but in his own style there is magic.

When a writer has a bad design, and would recommend to us any false and dangerous opinions, a good style has a very bad effect; as the soil of a garden, which improves wholesome vegetables, gives strength and magnitude to weeds. Men of ill principles know this, and are therefore very attentive and curious to please a reader's eye with elegance of expression, and propriety of language. A devil undressed would be but little able to make his way in this world.

To form an English style, you must be conversant with the best English writers: you must not only read them, but converse with them, and live with them, weighing their expressions, and imbibing their phraseology into your constitution; for which purpose, you will do well if you extract what is most worthy of observation, and place it in a collection, that it may remain with you.

The authors I would recommend for this purpose are Bacon (lord Verulam), Swift, South, Sprat, Addison, Roger North, and Dr. Middleton. Lord Bacon excels in richness of metaphor, and majesty of diction; as you will soon discover, if you read attentively his *Advancement of Learning*—a piece which every English scholar should almost know by heart: but as the English language has received many alterations since Bacon's time, some of his phrases are now too formal and obsolete. Swift has such vigour, clearness, and plainness in his style, as will never be exceeded; and his writing may be taken as the standard of the English language. South has strength and ornament; and, exclusive of the goodness of his matter, is one of the finest declaimers in the world. Sprat, in his

History of the Royal Society, is free and elegant to the highest degree, but rather too florid. When it is seen that the style is overmuch refined, we think a writer has a design upon us, and take offence at it. Dr. North, master of Trinity college in Cambridge, next after Barrow, and Greek professor, was so captivated with Sprat's history, that he said he would be content to read no other book for a whole year, if he might acquire by it the style of that writer.*

Roger North is excellent at a narrative: his language is animated, forcible, and humorous; but he is apt to transgress, by introducing exotic words and expressions. Middleton, in his English, is a pattern of classical art and elegance. The colouring of honest writers may be compared to the beauties of a flower; but Middleton's ornaments are the colours of a snake; and therefore no young man should venture to improve himself from such an author, till he is settled in his principles, and can distinguish with safety between the manner and the matter, the art and the artificer.

Dryden never wrote much prose; but what he did write is capital in its kind: it is nervous in the sense, and highly adorned in the periods.

There is another excellent English writer, but little known—Dr. Young, the father of the poet—who, in his two volumes of sermons, discovers such strength and propriety of expression, with such chaste and genuine ornaments of style, that he must charm and improve every judicious reader;

* Life of sir Dudley and Dr. John North, by Roger North, Esq. page 263.

for his materials are as excellent as the workmanship.

Anson's Voyage is a fine correct narrative, and a pattern in that sort of writing; I think it the nearest of any work we have in English to Cæsar's Commentaries. In some of the prose pieces of Dr. Johnson, especially his latter political pamphlets, you will find all the beauties of style and expression; of which, notwithstanding some very pardonable singularities, we must allow him to be a great master; and you may depend on him also as a friend to truth and virtue. His Lives of our English Poets, lately published, are inimitably written; and while they give you an example of style and composition, they will place before you, in a striking point of view, the inconsistency which is often found in the human character. They will show you how the powers of wit and profligacy of morals, manly literature and childish improvidence, elegance of speech and roughness of manners, strength of imagination and absurdity of principle, are tempered together in some of the sons of Parnassus; whence you will infer, that virtue is preferable to genius, and that integrity without learning is better than learning without sobriety.

Our pleaders at the bar, and people of the law, having great practice in the English language, become well acquainted with the powers of it, and many of them have excelled as patterns of English eloquence, of which many great examples occur in the charges which are to be found in the State Trials.

Since the time when I attempted to improve my English, (which I brought very bad from the

university,) some new writers have risen into fame, such as Hume, &c. who are to be regarded in literature as thieves and assassins are in society, and are therefore to be read with caution, as Middleton, their kinsman. When truth and elegance meet together, we are safe as well as happy; but it is a dangerous employment, and scarcely worth the experiment, to gather flowers upon rotten ground, where there is a dirty bottom, which threatens to swallow us up.

IX.

ON THE IDIOMS OF LANGUAGE.

EVERY language has its own proper forms of expression, called idioms, which mean proprieties or peculiarities. If, when you speak or write in one language, you make use of the idiom proper to another, you are guilty of what is called a barbarism. The term is commonly applied to offences against the classical modes of speech, established by the authority of the best writers among the Latins or the Greeks. The Greeks and Romans accounted all nations barbarians but themselves; therefore, to speak barbarous Latin, is to speak in that language with the idiom peculiar to the language of some other nation. According to the idiom of the English language, we use the phrase, *to get by heart*, which the Latins express by *mandare memoriæ*, to commit to memory; and *recitare memoriter*, to repeat by memory: but, if you were to speak in Latin

as you do in English, and say *gignere corde*, you would be guilty of a gross barbarism. We should laugh at a Frenchman, who, speaking of one that came to an untimely end, should say—"he did not die his own proper death;" but in French, *sa propre mort* is equivalent to what we call in English *a natural death*. How ridiculous it would sound to us in English, if a Frenchman, hearing one calling out with a loud voice, should say, "he cries with his head full!" but so they express themselves in their own language: *Crier à pleine tête*, is, to cry with as loud a voice as your head can bear; and *crier à tue tête*, is, to bawl so loud as to rend it. Languages differ very much in the use of the negative: in Latin and English two negatives make an affirmative; in Greek, French, and Italian, they are still negative; as *la scrittura non sa niente, ed insegna ogni cosa*, "writing knows nothing (*Ital.* does not know nothing), and yet teaches all things." It is very useful to compare the proverbial idioms of different languages. When we see how they have adopted different ideas to express the same sentiment, and come by so many different ways, some of them very wise and ingenious, to the same end—the prospects of the mind are greatly opened and enlarged. My meaning may be illustrated by a single instance. We say in English—to *pass the time away*; and gaming, or any other like diversion, is called *pastime*: but, in French, they affix a moral idea to the same expression, and call it *tuer le tems*, to kill time; as if every vain and useless employment were a species of murder, against that which is most valuable in

this world, and dies a natural death much sooner than we could wish, and after all, will certainly rise up against us in judgment.

We commonly use the word *barbarous*, to denote the cruel spirit of uncivilised and savage nations ; but the term originally belonged to confusion of speech, or the unintelligible language of a strange people ; and it is so applied in the Scriptures : “ If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.” A barbarian, therefore, in the primitive sense of the word, is a person of a strange language : the term itself is derived from the word Babel, by a substitution, which is very frequent, of one liquid consonant for another ; and it is remarkable, that the word Babel, as a monument of the confusion which happened there, has passed into all languages : the Greeks have it in their βαρβαρος, βαμβανω, for βαλβαινω, *to stammer* ; whence the Latin, *barbarus*, *balbus*, and *balbutio* ; the French *babiller* ; the English *babble*, *babbler*, &c.

X.

ON THE USE OF HISTORY.

IN a former letter I have mentioned *history* as an amusement ; but here I mean to recommend it as a *science*. To persons of a private station, it is not requisite ; but to every gentleman, who may be called to an active and public life in the service of his country, it is absolutely necessary. The higher

his rank, the more necessary is this science : if he is a prince, he is under greater obligation to study history than any of his subjects.

History shows us the laws of different countries, and the manners of different ages ; the principles on which empires have risen to power and greatness, and the errors by which they have declined and fallen into decay. It teaches us the fatal effects of intestine divisions, whether arising from the mercenary views of self-interest and ambition, or from visionary ideas of liberty, and false principles of policy. These things are worth the consideration of Englishmen at all times, especially at present. I am sorry to say it of my countrymen, (who, in the main, are a sensible and generous people ;) but they are factious by nature, and are unhappily encouraged to opposition by the present turn of their education. Those false ideas of liberty, government, and power, of which we are now reaping the fruits, have been propagated among them for many years past, and with as much assiduity as if the salvation of the people had depended upon them. From the doctrines of Algernon Sydney and Mr. Locke, which have so long been held in admiration, rebellion hath grown up as naturally as thorns and thistles spring from their proper seeds. These doctrines were exploded long ago by an able writer, whose work being unpopular at the time of its publication, when parties ran very high in this country, hath fallen into oblivion. History may in good measure dispel this charm, by teaching you, that there never was an instance of any government arising from *compact*, and the *general consent of the people*, from whence our

theorists suppose all governments to have been derived. The idea is an absurdity ; because kings, as the fathers of families, were prior to their subjects. All the great kingdoms of the earth either came by descent, or were gained by conquest ; and he who gave the victory gave the kingdom. Mr. Selden was of opinion, that there is actually no power upon earth but the power of the sword. So I think ; but then I must have leave to add, that this power of the sword belongs properly to him who created the iron of it ; and that the sword held by government for the taking away of any man's life, is held by his commission ; the reason of which is plain enough, if this were a place to insist upon it.

History will show you the comparative inconveniences of the different sorts of governments : that popular governments, especially the aristocratic, are the most expensive and tyrannical ; that when liberty is rampant, and power gets into the hands of those, who by nature or law have no right to it, it must be bought out of them again, with the money of those who neither share the power, nor partake of the plunder of their country. If you look at home, you will discover that the English government hath become more venal, expensive, and distressed, in proportion as it hath approached nearer to the popular form, by encroachments upon the old legal rights of the crown ; which, as lord Lyttelton has well observed in his History of Henry II, are the security of the people against the oppression of the nobility. The system of venality was established by sir Robert Walpole, who openly professed that he had set a price upon every man's

conscience, and turned all public business into a scramble.

When you read of wars, you will meet with examples of successful fore-sights, and fatal oversights; what opportunities have been lost for want of expedition and resolution: in particular, that no plots and rebellions were ever suppressed, but by unexpected and vigorous exertions in the beginning; and that no such exertions can well be made, where the power is lodged in too many hands, and measures are consequently slow and fluctuating: and, what is still worse, the secrets of the state are bandied about so publicly in debate, that they are always known to the enemy, who have warning to direct their own motions, so as to defeat every design that is formed against them. Secrecy is the wisdom of power; and without it, all power is like a body without a soul.

You will see how the talents of great commanders have wrought wonders when occasion required. Such was the constructing of a wooden bridge over the Rhine, by Julius Cæsar, for the passage of his troops into Germany: and such was the conduct of Xenophon, a scholar and a soldier, like Julius Cæsar, when he led his Greeks safe back through a vast tract of the enemy's country, after Cyrus, who had engaged them in his service, was defeated and slain. I have heard the following anecdote of Wolfe, who was a military genius, as well as a man of courage—that he was showing some general officers how expert his men were at a new mode of attacking and retreating upon hills; and when he stepped up to one of the officers after the performance, and asked him what he thought of it—"I

think," said he, "I see something here of the History of the Carduchi, who harassed Xenophon, and hung upon his rear, in his retreat over the mountains." "You are right," said Wolfe; "I had it from thence, and I see you are a man of reading; but our friends there are surprised at what I have shown them, because they have read nothing."

You may learn, how dangerous it is, under any circumstances whatsoever, to listen to the reports of an enemy, from the fatal and very striking example of Cæsar's legion in Gaul, cut off by leaving their winter-quarters, at the perfidious remonstrances of Ambiorix.

When you read of the ancient Greeks and Romans, you will be animated with that noble spirit of defending their country, which then prevailed, without the mercenary motives which have taken the place of it in latter ages, when there are other ways for men to raise and enrich themselves without public merit.

Though modern history is necessary, on account of the changes which have been made in the art of war, you will find that the ancient discipline was better, and the lives and characters of soldiers more military than at present, when they who strove for the mastery were temperate in all things, and inured to every kind of hardship.

You will perhaps observe, that sieges cost more time, and blood, and treasure, while prosperous battles in the field win more country and cities, which commonly surrender to the conqueror. When a war is carried into an enemy's country, it is maintained at their charge: the soldiers are obliged to more vigilance, and a stricter discipline: the

aggressor is animated, and the invaded are discouraged.

From a multitude of similar instances, too numerous to be pointed out particularly, gentlemen, by reading history, may improve their minds, and acquire that experience of things, which will fit them for advice and action, when their country shall have need of their assistance; for courage without conduct, and industry without information, are of little value.

XI.

ON TASTE.

WHAT we call *taste*, in the metaphorical sense of the word, is that faculty by which we distinguish beauty and excellence in the works of art; as the palate distinguishes what is pleasant in meat and drink. This latter faculty is natural; the former, so far as it signifies judgment, is the result of education and experience, and can be found only in a cultivated mind. Arts and sciences are so nearly related among themselves, that your judgment in one will always want some assistance from your knowledge of another; whence it comes to pass, that of people who pretend to taste, not one in twenty is really possessed of it. A spectator has heard others say, that such a figure in a certain picture is very fine, therefore, he says so; and, perhaps, he is really struck with its beauties, when they are pointed out: but in order to make the discovery for himself, it is necessary he should

have some acquaintance with the anatomy of the human figure, its due proportion, and the rules by which bodies are justly represented in perspective. If the figure is coloured, he should know what tints are natural to the skin, before he can pronounce whether they are true upon the canvass.

I had frequent opportunities of seeing from a particular instance how prone all ignorant persons are to prefer the worse to the better, and admire false excellence rather than true. In the seat of a certain nobleman, in the county where I was born, there is a very fine hall, with two equestrian paintings in it, nearly as large as life, one at each end of the room. Of these two, one is as graceful and highly finished as any picture of the sort in the kingdom; the other has little more merit than the figure of St. George upon a sign post; but having a gaudy appearance, with a very ill-judged glare of light in it, every vulgar eye is taken with it; while the exquisite beauties of its companion are neglected.

Hogarth, in his *Analysis of Beauty*, has laid down some of the best rules extant for enabling a person to distinguish elegance of drawing and propriety of design. His *Line of Beauty*, as he calls it, is a flowing line with contrary flexures, something like the letter *s*, but not so much inflected, which takes place in the most elegant forms that nature presents to us; and will therefore communicate the like elegance to works of art, when it is judiciously introduced and applied. We trace it in the stream that winds through the vale, in the curvatures of hills, the foliage of flowers, the elevations and depressions of the muscles in the human figure,

the graceful inclinations and attitudes of the body ; and a thousand other instances. The remarks which Hogarth himself has made upon it in that work (as original as any of this age or country), are very just and striking ; and they teach us, that beauty is not the creature of human fancy, as vulgarly supposed, but a real excellence, to be accounted for, and demonstrated on actual principles of science. For farther instruction in this matter, I must refer you to the book itself, which deserves not only to be read, but studied.

But there is another source of beauty, which has little or no dependence upon that famous line : and yet, if it is considered, I think it will carry artists to some uncommon perfection in their works, and assist a spectator in judging better of what they have composed.

Harmony in music has certain measures, which may be transferred with advantage to visible objects ; and the eye will be delighted on the same principles with the ear ; that is, by the like proportions and combinations. Though I propose this analogy, I would by no means be understood to make it an exclusive source of beauty : I am sensible there are others widely differing from it. I only mean to show you how it appears to me as one of the plainest and most universal rules we have to direct us in so critical a subject. What I have to say will be best understood by those who have some little knowledge of the theory of music, which I have endeavoured to explain to you on another occasion, so far as it is necessary to our present purpose. The *key-note*, and its *third* and *fifth*, constitute a perfect system of sound : with less than

these the ear is not satisfied, and you cannot have more without repetition. I would hence infer, that every composition of a painter, which will admit of such a partition, should consist of three parts : and in good pictures, properly fancied, we shall generally find them. There is one principal object on one side ; another to answer it on the other side ; and a third betwixt them. “ Simplicity,” says Hogarth, “ in the disposition of a great variety, is best accomplished by following nature’s constant rule, of dividing composition into three or five parts or parcels ; the painters accordingly divide theirs into fore-ground, middle-ground, and distance or back-ground ; which simple and distinct quantities *mass* together that variety which entertains the eye ; as the different parts of bass, tenor, and treble, in a composition of music, entertain the ear.” *

Here you are to remember, that every musical ratio resolves itself into two, one of which is always greater than the other. The interval of a *fifth* does not consist of two equal *thirds*, but of a third *major* and a third *minor* : it seems, therefore, that a picture would want harmony, if the intermediate of three objects were exactly in the middle ; where, by the way, a judicious painter never places it, but always inclining to one side. Suppose you have a moon-light piece ; in which there is a group of shadowy objects (as trees), on one side, and an-

* Analysis of Beauty, p. 112. I had ascribed this sentiment to Hogarth : but, on farther examination, I see it was published the year before his book came out, in an Essay on Musical Expression, by Mr. Avison, page 26, where this analogy is much insisted upon.

other to balance it on the other side, with the moon betwixt. If your two groups are equal in size, and alike in figure, and your moon in the centre, the picture will be very stiff and ill-composed. Your groups must therefore differ in size and figure, and project differently into the piece, and the moon must incline to one of the sides; and then the composition will have harmony. In the famous picture of general Wolfe, which every body knows, there are three groups of figures, diversified and disposed with great judgment, and the principal object of the piece is not truly in the middle.* This tripartite disposition is a principle of beauty, when we consider a piece laterally, that is, parallel to the horizontal line: and the same rule obtains when we consider a landscape in its *recession* from the eye. It is divided (as Hogarth has observed), into three distances, which are called, the *fore-ground*, the *middle-ground*, and the *off-skip*. The objects on the fore-ground are distinct in their lines, and strong in light and shade: those on the middle-ground are somewhat fainter: and those in the back-ground partake of that blue

* An ingenious painter, who came to my house while I was transcribing this letter for the press, and heard me speaking of this subject, said the principle was not new to him, and that he was certain it had been advanced by some great master. The next day, he brought me the following observation by the translator of Fresnoy's Art of Painting. "Annibal Caracci did not believe that a picture could be good, in which there were above twelve figures. It was Albano who told our author this, and from his mouth I had it. The reasons which he gave were, first, that he believed there ought not to be above three groups of figures in any picture." See Fresnoy on Painting, page 102.

colour which the intermediate air gives to all distant objects : but here again the measures should vary as before, because equality produces no harmony.

This tripartite disposition may be regarded at first as a source of beauty which is arbitrary and fanciful ; but I have so often found myself struck with it, before I had considered it critically, that if I were to lay out an advantageous piece of ground, I would introduce it wherever I had an opportunity, and trust for the event to the taste of the spectator. If you have less than three objects presented to the eye, the composition is deficient and empty ; if you have more, the sight is dissipated, and you must find some way of reducing, or, as Hogarth calls it, *massing* them. I suspect that the celebrated statue of the Laocoon, however excellent in other respects, strikes every eye with more pleasure because it consists of three figures, all contributing to the same effect.

In the use of perspective, regard should always be had to the rule of making unequal divisions. The centre of the object should never be in the centre of the piece : this is the case with the plans and elevations of builders, which have therefore no merit to the eye as pictures. There must be an obliquity in the lines, which produces harmony and variety ; and hence a good painter never gives you the full face of a building, nor places a street or an avenue receding directly from the eye, and vanishing into the middle of the picture : all his measures run obliquely ; and it will be found that his distribution is never so pleasing as when the sight has three principal points to rest upon.

If we make a transition to architecture, there the three dimensions of length, breadth, and height, which are common to all solid bodies, will never strike us so much with a sense of beauty as when they are accommodated to one another in some proportions deduced by analogy from the theory of music: and such measures, whether they are applied in the external elevation, or the internal divisions, will have a pleasing effect, though the spectator is ignorant of the cause; for musical sounds please the ears of those who know nothing about their proportions. Thus, for example, if we would proportion the dimensions of a room in the best manner, let us take the measures from the harmonic divisions of a musical string, called a monochord; whatever note the whole string sounds, two-thirds of that whole (the tension remaining the same) will sound a fifth; three-fourths will sound a fourth; one half will sound an octave, or eighth. To apply these to our present purpose, let the length of a room be twenty-four feet, the breadth sixteen, and the height twelve; then will the breadth be to the length in the ratio of two to three, which is that of the diapente or fifth, a most perfect concord; the height will be to the breadth in the ratio of three to four, which is that of the diatessaron, or fourth; and to the length in the ratio of one to two, which is that of the diapason, or octave: every person that has eyes will pronounce such a room to be finely proportioned, and feel the harmony of the dimensions without knowing them. The numbers 36, 24, and 12, having the same ratios to each other, may answer as well. Utility and convenience may require very different

dimensions ; but still, if we study elegance, we must have regard to the same rule. It may be necessary that the length should be to the breadth in the ratio of two to one, which is that of the octave ; or three to one, which is that of the twelfth ; or four to one, which is that of the disdiapason, or double octave.

If you would try, by a simple experiment, what proportion will do, only make the figure of a cross with two plain right lines, in which let the breadth be to the length as two to three, and let the point of transection, or distance of the arms from the bottom, compared with the whole length, be also as two to three ; such a figure will strike the eye with its symmetry, and perhaps be the most beautiful of the kind that can be constructed ; while other in-harmonious measures might be introduced, which would be as ungrateful to the sight as discords are to the ear.

But to return to our great principle of tripartition (if I may be allowed to make a new term for a new thing), the propriety and effects of it are so extensive, that it meets us almost every where. What is said of the sight, when compared with the hearing, will hold good also of the intellect, which is another kind of sight—the sight of the mind. In oratory, does not experience teach us, that the association of three ideas satisfies the mind, as the union of three sounds satisfies the ear ? No scholar is a stranger to the fulness and beauty of those three words, when set together, *veni, vidi, vici* ; the effect of which is increased by a consonance of alliteration, each word beginning with the same letter.

In the art of reasoning, every syllogism consists of three propositions, all of which have a mutual consonance, if they make good logic. But here I am sensible that the parallel may raise a very ridiculous idea in the mind of a musical reader, if he imagines himself to hear a logical concert, by one person repeating the major proposition, another the minor, and a third the conclusion, and all speaking their parts at once. However, it is certainly true, and to our purpose, that as in musical concord two extremes have consent with the mean, and with one another, so in logic two ideas agree with a third, which is called the middle term, and all make good harmony together in the conclusion.

The principle of tripartition, as deducible from music, seems on the whole to be an actual source of pleasure to the judgment; and it is supported by such a variety of instances, that it must be founded in nature. When we are upon a right scent, truth will seem to run along before us of its own accord. There is one remarkable example which I have omitted, and it is this: that the beauty of the light, which gives beauty to all visible objects, is itself constituted by three colours, into which it divides itself—the *red*, the *yellow*, and the *blue*, which are the only original colours, all others being compounded of these; and a pure brightness is the result of them, when their effects are united. These strange coincidences between the elements of different arts have often filled my mind with wonder. All I would infer from this uniformity is, that the principle I have proposed is not imaginary, but real, in nature: and if so, your taste will cer-

tainly be improved by the application of it : for nature is the ground of art, and a sure rule of pleasure to the judgment.

With regard to composition in painting, which was the art I had chiefly in view from the beginning of this letter, as a polite subject in which every gentleman should have some discernment ; the beauties of it, when considered at large, consist in propriety of action ; grace of attitude, which is also called ease ; truth of proportion ; and anatomical perspective. It would require another letter to explain this particularly : I shall only say, that all these beauties concur in the pieces of sir Joshua Reynolds, perhaps more truly than they were ever found together in the works of any other master. It is now very fashionable to see faults in his pictures, but I think chiefly with those who are slow in distinguishing real excellence. Look at the best family pictures of Vandyke, you generally see all the figures standing inanimate, like kings and queens, with nothing to do, but to look at you from their frames : but sir Joshua strikes out a general design, to which every figure in the composition contributes something : instead of looking at you, they are engaged in some business of their own ; and while you look at them, you become interested in it yourself. Thus his family pictures, instead of losing their value with age, like an almanack, will retain, as long as they can last, and that even in the eyes of strangers to the family, the merit of historical compositions.

In this copious subject I might have descended to many other particulars ; but if you read Hogarth's book carefully, and attend to the few observations

I have here added to it, you will acquire what Aristotle calls *δευτερον ομμα*, *a second sight*; that sight with which men of education see things, while the ignorant overlook them.

To Hogarth's treatise I would add the seven discourses delivered by sir Joshua Reynolds to the Royal Academy: many deep, many subtile, many refined observations, are there expressed in correct and elegant language: and if you should not learn the art of painting, nor desire to learn it, you may thence learn the arts of writing and expression, in which every scholar will be glad to improve himself. In this view, I would recommend these discourses to your consideration. To painters, they form an excellent treatise on the sublime: to other readers they offer many great and original sentiments, which may be transferred with advantage to other subjects.

XII.

ON THE ORIGIN AND USE OF FABLES.

Now you are employed in the exercise of raising moral observations from the matter of Æsop's Fables, it may be worth our while to inquire a little into their nature and original.

The ancients made great use of fables, and with good reason; for whatever is conceived by the mind must enter by the senses: and moral truth is never so easily understood, as when it is exemplified by a reference to some parallel case in nature, particularly to the various instincts of brute creatures,

which were undoubtedly designed by the Creator to answer this end, by representing to us the several characters and colours of moral good and evil in a way which even children can understand.

The origin of fables is not very clear from the heathen account of them. It is probable they are nearly as ancient as the history of mankind ; or, at least, that there never was a time, of which we have any knowledge, when they were not familiar in Palestine and Egypt, from whence they were borrowed by the Greeks and Romans.

Suidas says, the fable of the Eagle and Nightingale in Hesiod is the oldest extant, and that Hesiod was a hundred years before Æsop. The use of fables to orators is exemplified from the well-known instance of Menenius Agrippa, who reconciled the populace to the senate at Rome, on occasion of an insurrection, by repeating to them the fable of the Belly and the Members. When Themistocles admonished the Athenians not to change their magistrates, he argued from the fable of the Fox and the Swarm of Flies.

The Greeks were always notorious for stealing all sorts of learning, and claiming to themselves the merit of every useful invention. The *fable* is the same with the *parable*, the earliest specimen of which occurs in the book of Judges, where Jotham signifies to the people the temper and fate of an usurper, under the similitude of the trees going forth to choose them a king ; in which composition inanimate things, as trees, are made to speak and reason just as they do in the fables of Æsop. The fruitful trees decline the office, and the bramble offers his services, and gets into power ; the moral

of which, as applicable to the person of Abimelech, was this : that the desire of reigning does not prevail in wise and good men, who would feed the people, and protect them under the shadow of their authority ; but chiefly in men of rough minds and bloody intentions, who harass the people, and are at length consumed along with them in the unjust exercise of their power.

All the parables of Christ are spiritual discourses, very nearly allied to the form of the fable, and were delivered for the sake of some moral, which would be either obscure without an illustration, or offensive to the hearers if it were delivered to them in plain terms. When the prophet Nathan approached the king, to convict him of his sin, and bring him to repentance, the case would not admit of any direct reproof : so, you see, he gains his attention, and steals upon his affections, by putting a case to him, in which he seemed to have no immediate concern : and when his indignation was raised against a fictitious person, the prophet turned it upon himself, with that striking application, "Thou art the man." Then there was no retracting : he had already condemned himself in the judgment he had passed upon the cruel offender in the parable.

As to *Æsop*, the reputed author of the fables which go under his name, the accounts we have of him are so obscure and contradictory, that his character itself seems to be fabulous. His fables are plainly a collection taken from different ages and different countries. In the 13th chapter of the *Wisdom of the Son of Sirach*, the fable of the Brass Kettle, as a dangerous companion to the Earthen Pot, is clearly referred to, and was therefore a fable

of the East. Some others, which we find under the name of *Æsop*, seem to be alluded to in the course of the same chapter. The fable of the Fox and the Grapes must be of the same original; for we never heard that foxes are given to plunder vineyards either in Greece or Italy; but the fact was common in Palestine, and is alluded to in the Song of Solomon, ch. ii. ver. 15. The stories which are told of *Æsop*, that he was a slave, that his mistress persecuted him, that he had a golden cup, and some other particulars, bespeak a very strong resemblance to the history of Joseph, so famed for his wisdom in Egypt, the land of fables and hieroglyphics. The names are plainly the same; and therefore I am rather inclined to think, that the history of *Æsop* was either borrowed from that of Joseph, or that he was a slave or a captive of that name from the East, who brought much of the traditional wisdom of his own country with him into the West. But when all circumstances are considered, I think the former is the more probable opinion.

XIII.

ON THE USE OF HEATHEN LEARNING.

IN the middle ages of the church many Christians were very shy of the heathen writers; they were afraid lest the heathen principles of religion, morality, and policy, should be imbibed together with their poetry and oratory, and corrupt the minds of their children and scholars. Much was said of what had happened to St. Jerome; that in a vision

he dreamed he was severely scourged for reading Cicero: but St. Anstin, who was a man of great devotion, and one of the first scholars of the church, assures us, that one of Cicero's pieces, inscribed to Hortensius, first gave him an appetite to a more divine sort of wisdom, and that he embraced Christianity in consequence of the sentiments which that treatise had raised in his mind. Basil, another great scholar of the church, and a man of unquestioned piety, recommended the prudent reading of profane authors to some young people under his tuition. After his example, therefore, I must advise you to read with prudence, and with a proper mixture of caution; not trusting yourself to the reasonings of profane writers, till you are well grounded in principles of truth; and then, as the bee can settle upon a poisonous flower without being hurt, and can even extract honey from it; so may you improve your talents for the highest purposes, and arm yourself more effectually for the defence of sacred truth, by studying profane orators, poets, and historians.

Writers are frequently rising up, with ill designs against your religion, who polish their style, and take the utmost pains to adorn it after the pattern of the best writers of antiquity. Some scholars will always be wanted on the other side, to turn the powers of composition against them; and truth will never fail to add such a force and weight to their embellishments, that the enemy will not be able to stand against them. He that reads the speech of St. Paul to king Agrippa, and considers it as a composition, will never be persuaded that cold and beggarly diction is requisite in a Christian

apologist. The apostle, though a rigid Jew by his education, discovered on occasion a familiar acquaintance with the heathen poets.

XIV.

ON THE CONSENT BETWEEN THE SCRIPTURES AND
THE HEATHEN POETS.

SOME ingenious men, of more wit than experience, have objected to the Christian revelation, because they find no traces of it in their favourite classical writers. The testimony of an adversary is always valuable; but upon this occasion we have no reason to expect it from those who had their reasons for vilifying the Jews, and all that belonged to them. If we find any thing to our purpose, we must have it as it were by accident; and of this sort much may be collected.

You have begun to read Horace. If you examine his third ode, you will see him confirming the sacred history of the Scripture in some particulars not unworthy of your notice, which could be derived to the heathens only from the fountains of Divine Revelation, or from tradition proceeding from the same original. What can we understand by the *audax Iapeti genus*, but the posterity of Japhet, that son of Noah, from whom the European nations are descended? Japhet was the first father of the Greeks and Romans after the flood, as surely as Adam was the father of all mankind. Then,

what is Prometheus's fraud against Heaven, but that offence, whatever it was, which brought death into the world? Here we have a theft acknowledged against Heaven, and all manner of evils and diseases are sent upon earth in consequence of it :

Post ignem æthereâ domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors.

And what is more remarkable, he tells us of the change which was made in the period of human life, with the reason of it ;

Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

Here it is affirmed by implication, that death was originally at a greater distance, and that the divine justice shortened human life slowly and unwillingly, not till the increasing corruption of the world had made it necessary to lessen the opportunities of sin. The lives of men, before the flood, were of many hundred years ; but when " all flesh had corrupted his way," then the curse took place at the flood, and man's life was contracted nearly to the present span. How should Horace know this ? Or how should Hesiod know it, from whom he borrowed it ? for it is precisely the doctrine of the Mosaic history : and as it carries us back to the times before the flood, of which no human history was ever written, it must have been taken either from the Scripture itself, or from some tradition, which, if

it could be traced, would carry us back to the same original.

These things then, though they are *in* Horace, are not *of* Horace ; nor are they of the Greeks or the Romans ; but of Divine Revelation : and it is remarkable, that we should meet with so many sacred doctrines in so small a compass. I take the opportunity to speak of this while the ode is under our consideration : but when you are farther acquainted with heathen learning, you will find abundant evidence of the same sort, which they who are disaffected to the Christian system, and would set up the classics against the Bible, will never like to hear of ; but will endeavour to discountenance all such things, and dismiss them in the lump, as if they had no relation to the sacred history, but such as fancy or partiality hath given them.

XV.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

As you seemed to be entertained with those passages of Horace which are parallel to the sacred history, I shall lead you on to some more passages of the same sort in other authors ; and if you should not understand all of them critically at present, I hope the time will come when you will find little or no difficulty in any of them.

Herod, you know, who was king in Judæa at the birth of Christ, slew all the children in Bethlehem. By birth and education he was a Jew, and as such would eat no swine's flesh. Macrobius, a learned

heathen writer in the earliest times of the church, tells us, that the slaughter of infants by Herod was so sudden and indiscriminate, that Herod's own child, then at nurse, was put to death among the rest ; which fact being told to the emperor Augustus, he made this reflection upon it—that “ it was better to be Herod's hog than his son.” You will naturally argue upon this case, that if Augustus actually said this, Herod's child was slain : if so, the infants were slaughtered in Bethlehem ; Jesus Christ was born there ; the Wise Men of the East came to worship him, and reported his birth to Herod, &c. as the Gospel relates ; for all these circumstances hang together, and account for one another.

Tacitus and Suetonius, both bitter enemies to the Christians, agree in relating that extraordinary circumstance of a persuasion generally prevailing among the heathens, about the time of Christ's birth, that a king should come from the East. The Roman senate were in such a panic at the apprehension of a king, that they were about to make a decree, that no child born in a certain year should be brought up, lest this great king should arise among themselves. Some temporizing Jews, called Herodians, flattered Herod that he was the king expected ; and it is probable this opinion, which they had infused into him, made him so jealous of a rival, when the birth of Christ was reported to him. Persius, in his fifth satire, alludes to the extraordinary pomp and illumination with which Herod's birth-day was celebrated even in the reign of Nero.

But the manner in which this tradition operated

upon Virgil is still more extraordinary, and little short of a prodigy. It produced from that serious and cautious poet the wonderful eclogue, entitled Pollio; the imagery and expressions of which are so different from the Roman style, and so near to the language of the prophet Isaiah, that if this eclogue had been written as early as the days of Hesiod, the infidels of this time would most probably have undertaken to prove, that the prophet had borrowed from the poet. Bishop Lowth has shown, with great judgment, that this eclogue could not possibly be meant of any one of those persons to whom heathen critics have applied it: and it does not appear how we can give any rational account of it, unless we allow that the poet had seen the predictions of the prophet, and accommodated the matter of them to the prevailing expectation of the times; ascribing them unjustly to a Sibylline oracle of heathen original, because nothing great was to be allowed to the Jews.

It will be worth your attention to consider some of the particulars minutely. He calls the time in which this wonderful person is to be born, *ultima ætas*, the *last days*, after the manner of the Scripture: "God," saith the apostle, "hath *in these last days* spoken unto us by his Son." According to the prophet Daniel, the Messiah was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity." So saith the poet:

Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetuâ solvent formidine terras.

The prophet Isaith saith, "Unto us a child is

born ; unto us a son is given ; and his name shall be called, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace :” the sense of all which is thus expressed in the eclogue :

Ille Deûm vitam accipiet, Divisque videbit
 Permixtos heroas, et ipse videbitur illis,
 Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.
 Cara Deûm soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum !

The scenery by which the prophet hath figuratively signified the times of the Gospel is minutely adopted, being extremely beautiful and poetical. “ The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad ; the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose ; the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,” &c.

At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu,
 Errantes hederas passim cum baccare tellus
 Mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.
 ———nec magnos metuent armenta leones.
 Ineultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva.
 Adspice, venturo *latentur* ut omnia sæclo.

If the prophet informs us that serpents should no longer hurt or destroy, the poet saith the same :

Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni
 Occidet——

Instead of expatiating any farther on the passages of this poem, let me recommend to your perusal Mr. Pope’s imitation of it, entitled *The Messiah* ; and let me observe, upon the whole, that if Virgil had received his intelligence from Bethlehem, and had thereupon searched the prophets for materials,

he could scarcely have risen higher in his description: so very extraordinary is the whole tenor of that eclogue. "Truly," says the learned Casaubon, "I must confess, though I have read that poem pretty often, (on Christmas-day, after church-service, I seldom omitted it) yet I still read it with great delight and admiration; not so much for the loftiness of the verse, which is admirable; but for the clear evidence of God's hand and providence in it, which I think none can doubt or question, but they that can believe the world was made of atoms." I borrow this observation from his treatise on Credulity and Incredulity, p. 144; a precious little work, which is worthy to be considered by every Christian scholar.

I have hitherto presented to you such passages as have already attracted the notice of learned men. To these I may now add some others which are less open to observation. If you examine the story of Aristæus, in the fourth book of Virgil's *Georgics*, you will see the poet opening a passage for him through the waters by a miracle; and he describes the fact in terms as much like those in the book of Exodus, as if they had been professedly taken from it:

—— simul alta jubet discedere late
Flumina, qua juvenis gressus inferret; at illum
Curvata in montis faciem circumstetit unda,
Accepitque sinu vasto——

Georg. iv. 359.

This passage in the *Georgics* reminds me of another in Callimachus, which describes a miraculous

act, parallel to that of Moses in the wilderness, when he smote the rock with his rod, and brought forth water for the people in abundance; as related Numb. xx. 11. Thus does Rhea, in a land of drought, command the earth to bring forth its waters; she lifts up her arm on high; strikes a mountain with her sceptre, which is instantly parted asunder, and pours forth water abundantly:

—αντανυσασα θεα μεγαν ὑψοθι πηχυν,
Πληξεν ορος σκηπτρω* το δε οι διχα πουλυ διεστη,
Εκ δ' εχεεν μεγα χευμα.

Call. Προς τον Δια, l. 30.

You will think it less remarkable that the poet Callimachus should use such language, when I tell you that he was librarian at Alexandria to Ptolemy Philadelphus, at whose command the Bible was translated into Greek by the seventy interpreters.

If you go forward in the same book of the Georgics, you will meet with a miraculous generation of bees out of a dead carcase:

—dictu mirabile monstrum
Adspiciunt; liquefacta boum per viscera toto
Stridere apes utero, et ruptis effervere costis.

Georg. iv. 554.

What is this but the breeding of Samson's bees in the dead carcase of the lion? as you have it, Judg. xiv. 8. "He turned aside to see the carcase of the lion; and behold there was a swarm of bees, and honey in the carcase of the lion." The animal is an ox with Virgil, because lions were never offered in sacrifice; but the circumstance in which the whole

wonder consists, is the same. Would the poet have dreamed of such a monstrous production of bees, unless we suppose that this miracle had an alliance with some other, which gave the first hint?—for a miracle it is, that bees, which delight in flowers and sweet odours, should ever be found in a putrid stinking carcase. Pliny says, they never settle upon a *dead flower*; much less upon a *dead body*.*

When Troy was taken and burnt, as Virgil has related the story in the second book of the *Æneid*, you see *Æneas*, with his family, flying from the danger, while *Creusa* loiters behind, and is miraculously lost. Here we have the father of a family escaping with his household from a city on fire, and the wife is unaccountably left behind. You will say, this agreement of the circumstances might be accidental; and I cannot deny it: but the circumstances are so extraordinary, and so like to *Sodom* burning, and *Lot* flying from it with his family, while his wife is left behind, that I think we shall make the difficulty less, if we suppose, that he, who wrote his *Pollio* in Hebrew imagery, and made a way by a miracle through the waters, and placed a swarm of bees in a dead carcase—was better acquainted with the Scriptures than is commonly imagined.

The story of *Orpheus*, which is related in the fourth book of the *Georgics* with all the powers of poetry, must have been formed on some sacred tradition. There is such a mixture of circumstances, that I dare not attempt to account for them; but in the outlines of this story you have a man going

* *Mortuis ne floribus quidem, non modo corporibus, insidunt,—lib. xi. cap. 8.*

down to the regions of death, in the character of a mediator, to redeem a beloved wife, who had perished by a serpent concealed in the grass.

In the fabulous character of the *Hero*, so much celebrated by the poets, we have a champion and deliverer, partly divine, partly human, invested with supernatural powers; like the person promised to our first parents, the miraculous seed, who was to conquer the great enemy of man's salvation. And it is remarkable in the character of *Achilles*, the first of heroes in the first of poets, that he is the son of a deity, and vulnerable only in the *heel*: a circumstance so singular, that it points to the true original of the heroic character.

How could it possibly happen, that the idea of an intercourse between heaven and earth, and of a divine person, the son of a deity, coming down to the world in a human form, should have been so familiar to the heathens, and so universal, unless there was at first some authority to ground the persuasion upon? In the wanderings of fancy and imagination there can be no such uniformity. Horace, upon the ground of this doctrine, makes a compliment to Augustus, supposing him to be a divine person, the son of a deity, come down from heaven in a human form, and ready to ascend thither again upon the wings of the wind, because the world was too wicked a place for him to live in :

Sive, mutatâ juvenem figurâ,
 Ales in terris imitaris, almæ
 Filius Maïæ——
 Serus in cœlum redeas——
 Neve te nostris vitiis iniquum
 Ocyor aura
 Tollat——

The like intercourse is admitted by Ovid. Jupiter tells the assembly in heaven, how he had descended to the world in a human form, to make inquisition concerning its wickedness before the flood :

—————summo delabor Olympo,

Et Deus humanâ lustrò sub imagine terras.

Met. lib. i. 212.

That it was no unusual thing for the gods to visit the earth in a human shape, was an opinion so rooted in the minds of most heathens, that the people at Lystra, seeing the effect of a supernatural power in Paul and Barnabas, concluded immediately that they were “ gods come down to them in the likeness of men.”—Acts, xiv. 11.

What can be more express than the testimony of Ovid, in the beginning of his *Metamorphoses*, to the Mosaic history of the creation, and the subsequent destruction of the world by the flood ? The whole has such an affinity to the Scripture, that it looks more like a transcript than a compilation from traditionary fragments. Notices of the fall ; and of the curse upon man and the earth ; and the depravity which prevails in consequence of some change which has happened to human nature, are to be met with in several authors. Hesiod is the first who tells us, that God sent evil upon earth in return for an offence committed against heaven, in stealing from thence the use of fire, which was supposed to have been originally concealed from man, and obtained by fraud :

Τοις δ' ἐγὼ ἀντὶ πυρὸς δώσω κακὸν:—

Erg. l. 57.

In his Theogony, he observes more particularly, that this evil was, in a great measure, derived from woman, whom Jupiter gave to man with that intention :

‘Ως δ’ αὐτως ἀνδρεσσι κακὸν θυγατρὶς γυναικας
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμετης εἰσεθηκε——

l. 600.

The same author describes the primitive state of man as a golden age, in which men lived as gods, without fear or care ; when the earth brought forth all its fruits spontaneously :

‘Ως τε θεοὶ δ’ ἐζών, ἀκηδεα θυμὸν ἔχοντες,
——καρπὸν δ’ ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἀρουρα
αὐτοματὴ πολλὸν τε καὶ ἀφθονόν——

Erg. l. 112.

After this, men grew more and more degenerate, till an age of iron took place ; in which good men were persecuted by bad men, and all manner of wickedness and violence prevailed : then Justice and Righteousness forsook the earth, and fled back to their native skies, leaving behind them all kinds of evils without any remedy.

The sentence of man to labour, by the judgment of the gods upon him, is clearly alluded to by Virgil ; and *thorns* and *thistles* are introduced, in the express terms of the Scripture : the lines are very remarkable.

Mox et frumentis labor additus, ut mala culmos
Esset rubigo, segnisque horreret in arvis

Carduus : intereunt segetes ; subit, aspera silva,
Lappæque, tribulique——

Georg. i. 150.

The necessity of a propitiatory offering, as an atonement for sin, was recognized in most of the heathen sacrifices ; of which you will find such circumstantial accounts in Homer, that a ritual might be extracted from him, not very greatly differing from that of the Levitical law. The *first born of lambs* are particularly mentioned as being applied to this sacred use :

Αρνων πρωτογονων δεξιην ιερην εκατομην.

Il. 8, 102.

All heathens entertained the opinion, that the wrath of the Deity against sin might be averted by sacrifice and mediation ; and nothing but this persuasion, carried to the most extravagant height, could have prompted them to the horrible practice of offering human sacrifices ; a practice which obtained in almost every heathen nation of the world. To this doctrine of mediation and atonement Horace alludes, in that passage of his second ode ;

Cui dabit partes scelus expiandi
Jupiter ?———

Now ask yourself, how so strange a persuasion as this could ever prevail in the world ? Does your reason inform you, that there is any relation between the pardon of sin and the smoke of an innocent animal, first bled to death, and then burnt upon an altar ? No sooner does a philosopher rea-

son upon this case, than he determines otherwise, and rejects the doctrine; of which you may see an instance in the verses of Cato;

Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur victima pro te?
Stultitia est morte alterius sperare salutem.

Lib. iv. Dist. 14.

Yet, in this persuasion, *foolish* as human reason pronounces it to be, all heathens persevered, from before the days of Homer to the establishment of Christianity, and afterwards. What can we think of a practice so strange, so notorious, and so universal, but that the voice of reason was overpowered by the authority of a divine institution, which custom and tradition spread abroad through all places and all ages?

I can tell you of another doctrine, in which the most ancient of the poets agree with the Scripture, in opposition to the dictates of human philosophy. I think it never was pretended by any of those modern writers, who have drawn schemes of natural religion for us, that government is of divine authority, and that monarchy is sacred: so far from it, that all deists, to a man, abhor the notion, and are out of patience with the Scripture for giving countenance to it. But it was an established doctrine with the first heathen writers, Homer and Hesiod, that magistrates are the vicegerents of Heaven; that government is sacred; and that kings derive their *honour* and *support* from God; as you may see by the following passages:

Εκ δε Διός βασιλῆες—

Hes. Theog. l. 96.

——δικασπολοι, οί τε θεμιστας
Προς Διος ειρυαται——

Iliad. α, 238.

Μητε συ, Πηλειδη, θελ' εριζεμεναι βασιληι·
Αντιβιην επει ουποθ' ομοιης εμμορε τιμης
Σκηπτουχος βασιλευς, ωτε Ζευς κυδος εδωκεν.

Iliad. α, 277.

Θυμος δε μεγας εστι διοτρεφεος βασιληος·
Τιμη δ' εκ Διος εστι——

β, 196.

If this doctrine is contrary to human reason, it was no human invention : if it was not invented, it was received : and if it contradicts that desire of liberty and self-government which prevails in all mankind, it must have been received on some great authority. For it is to be observed, that we are here not insisting merely on the fact, that monarchical government did actually obtain universally in the earliest ages ; but also that their writers allowed it in theory as a divine institution ; which is the doctrine of revelation. It was also an opinion of heathen antiquity, nearly allied to the foregoing, that property, in the most remote times, was authoritatively divided among the people by princes ; not assumed at random, as it must have happened, if nations had emerged at first out of a state of nature :

Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Castore Pollux,
Post ingentia facta, Deorum in templa recepti,
Dum terras hominumque colunt genus, aspera bella
Componunt, agros assignant, oppida conduunt.

Hor. Epist. lib. ii. ep. 1.

When you have considered all these particulars, to which I might have added a multitude of others, but that I would not exhaust your patience; you will despise the suggestion, that an affection to Greek and Roman literature has a necessary tendency to lessen the belief of divine revelation. They are but very superficial scholars, who think there are no evidences of Christianity in those writers of antiquity, whom, for their eminence, we call *classical*. This is indeed so far from being the case, that there is scarcely a doctrine of the Scriptures which they have not preserved, nor a miracle which they have not imitated, and transferred to themselves, in some form or other; insomuch, that Celsus, one of the earliest writers against Christianity, most impudently pretended, that the books of Moses were compiled from the miracles of paganism. He might have said, with equal truth, that the two tables of the Ten Commandments were borrowed from the Laws of Solon; whereas, it is certain, on the contrary, that there were no written laws among the heathens till more than a thousand years after the law of Moses; and that the laws of the Twelve Tables among the Romans, and other heathen laws of the first antiquity, were evidently borrowed from the laws of the Jews; as Josephus proves admirably well, in his Discourse against Appion. Any person may see this who will read over attentively the laws of the Twelve Tables, as they are given in page 315 of the first volume of Mr. Hooke's Roman History.

XVI.

ON HORACE'S LOVE OF SOLITUDE.

WHEN the course of our study carries us to the Epistles of Horace, I generally meet with some particular passage in every lesson which engages my attention, and fixes itself upon my mind, either on account of the elegance of the expression, or the value of the sentiment. In the epistle of yesterday, he spoke of his country-seat as a situation which restored him to himself; his meaning is, that in this place of solitude and retirement, he could follow his meditations, and be happy in his own company; which was not the case with him when at Rome;

Villice, silvarum et mihi me reddentis agelli.

Can any thing be more characteristic of a scholar and a man of genius than these few words? There never was a good, or a wise, or an ingenious man, who did not frequently wish to be thus put in possession of himself, in some scene of peace and quietness. In the life of a city, amidst the variety of impertinent objects, and the hurry of company, a thoughtful mind is withdrawn from itself, and under continual interruption. It is common for a man to lose his companion in a crowd, and it is not uncommon for him to lose himself in the same way. When the mind is daily conversing with others, it has no opportunity of conversing with itself: these

two employments differ, as the gentle murmuring of the solitary brook differs from the noise and agitation of a gale at sea. It is always a sign that the mind has some good in it, when it grows fond of retirement. The foolish and thoughtless part of mankind fly daily to others, because they have nothing entertaining in themselves : they have no interest in the subjects of religion or science of any kind, no imagery of their own to dwell upon ; whence it happens, that they are never so effectually lost, as when they find themselves. Wise men have little entertainment in company, because what is called company, and that even good company, is so often composed of the ignorant, the illiterate, the vain, and the thoughtless, who have all fled from themselves to find one another.

If you would apply this sentiment of Horace to yourself, let it teach you, while you are young, to lay in the seeds of instruction and learning ; that hereafter you may have a furnished mind to look in upon, and may find more than you lose when you go out of company. Thus you will know a pleasure by experience, which never can be known from any description of it—that of feasting upon mental matter ; of pursuing truth without interruption ; and of expanding and perfecting the ideas that have been laid up in the memory. This pleasure has been known and spoken of with rapture and enthusiasm in all ages by philosophers, poets, orators, and divines ; and he is a miserable empty being, who dies without understanding it. Few men have ever been fit to be in the world, who did not love better to find themselves out of it.

XVII.

ON THE EFFECT OF LEARNING ON THE MANNERS.

Two lines of Ovid are quoted in Lilly's *Syntaxis*, which deserve the attention of every scholar :

Adde quod ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

There is in most tempers a natural ferocity which wants to be softened ; and the study of liberal arts and sciences will generally have this happy effect in polishing the manners. When the mind is daily attentive to useful learning, a man is detached from his passions, and taken as it were out of himself ; and the habit of being so abstracted, makes the mind more manageable, because the passions are out of practice. Besides, the arts of learning are the arts of peace, and furnish no encouragements to a hostile disposition.

There is a dreadful mistake too current among young people, and which their own inexperience is apt to cherish and commend in one another ; that a boy is of no consequence, and makes no figure, unless he is quarrelsome, and renders himself a terror to his companions. They call this honour and spirit ; but it is false honour, and an evil spirit : it does not command any respect, but begets hatred and aversion ; and as it cannot well consist with the purposes of society, it leads a person into a sort

of solitude, like that of the wild beast in the desert, who must spend his time by himself, because he is not fit for company.

If any difference arises, it should be conducted with reason and moderation : scholars should contend with wit and argument, which are the weapons proper to their profession. Their science is a science of defence ; it is like that of fencing with the foil, which has a guard or button upon the point, that no offence may be given : when the sword is taken up instead of the foil, fencing is no longer an exercise of the school, but of the field. If a gentleman with a foil in his hand appears heated, and in a passion with his adversary, he exposes himself by acting out of character ; because this is a trial of art, and not of passion.

The reason why people are soon offended, is only this—that they set too high a value upon themselves. A slight reflection can never be a great offence, but when it is offered to a great person ; and if a man is such in his own opinion, he will measure an offence, as he measures himself, far beyond its value.

If we consult our religion upon this subject, it teaches us, that no man is to value himself for any qualifications of mind or body ; that he has numberless sins for which he ought to humble himself daily in the sight of God ; and that it is his duty to think all others better than himself. If God humbled himself to exalt us, true greatness must consist in abasing ourselves, and giving honour to our company. What we call complaisance, gentility, or good breeding, affects to do this ; and is the imitation of a most excellent virtue. If we obtain the

good opinion of men by the shadow of a virtue, the reality will entitle us to the praise of God, which is the only true and lasting honour.

XVIII.

ON TRUE AND FALSE HONOUR.

You wonder how I should speak against honour, when it is the principle upon which every gentleman ought to act. I grant it; but there are two sorts of honour; the one genuine, the other spurious; the one is the honour of wise men, the other of fools. Honour, in its best sense, is the regard which a virtuous man hath to the preservation of his character: it is, properly speaking, the modesty of the mind, or moral modesty, which is shocked with the imputation of an unworthy action. But then you will observe, that the person who pretends to be a man of honour, must first be well informed concerning the nature of good and evil; without which he may be shocked at any appearance of goodness in himself, and glory in his shame, which is a very common case. False honour may always be distinguished by these two marks; first, that it is a very irritable principle; and secondly, that it makes the opinion or fashion of the world the only rule of its conduct. The honour which preserves a man is good; the honour which inflames him is bad; and if he has no rule but the custom of his company, whereby to judge of good and evil, his company may be very bad, and very much mistaken, and then he will be led into great

absurdities, and act more like a madman than a gentleman. According to this idea of honour, a man hates what his company hates ; and thus it happens that we find a sort of honour among thieves and pickpockets, who, like other societies, are a rule to one another.

Without these necessary distinctions, that sense of honour, which you take to be the security of your character, will endanger the loss of it ; because you will be tempted either to mean or rash actions, for fear of losing the esteem of those whose judgment is of no value.

Suppose a man, whose birth and fortune put him amongst gentlemen, is a scandalous and notorious liar. When such a person is charged with his fault before company, he ought to confess and repent of it, by all the laws of conscience, virtue, and religion. But what saith honour ? It bids him persist in the denial of his guilt, and murder his accuser, if it is in his power ; when the voice of reason and justice would have thanked him for the admonition.

First, a man tells a lie to defame the character of another ; then he tells a second by denying the first ; then he fights in defence of his denial : and the vulgar notion of honour not only acquits him, but obliges him to it. Between this honour and the frantic fury of actual madness, there is no difference but in the name : if there is any difference, it is only this ; that honour acts deliberately upon principle, and madness raves by accident and misfortune. The devil would be better pleased if the world were full of such honour ; but God and all good men must detest it, as one of the greatest plagues that ever prevailed upon earth.

XIX.

ON LITERARY COMPOSITION.

COMPOSITION is not only a difficult task, but is indeed a miserable drudgery, when you have neither rules to direct you, nor matter to work upon; which is the case with many poor boys, who are obliged to squeeze out of their brains an exercise against the time appointed.

To store the mind with good matter, you must accustom yourself to the reading of good authors, such as historians, poets, orators, philosophers, and controversialists; the last are particularly to be studied for the well managing of an argument. The political and theological controversialists are best; but they seldom fall in the way of the younger sort of readers.

When you are to write upon any subject, the best way of entering upon it, is to set down what your own mind furnishes, and say all you can before you descend to consult books, and read upon it: for if you apply to books before you have laid your plan, your own thoughts will be dissipated, and you will dwindle from a composer to a transcriber.

In thinking upon a subject, you are to consider, that every proposition is an answer to some question; so that if you can answer all the questions that can be put to you concerning it, you have a thorough understanding of it: and in order to compose, you have nothing to do but to ask your-

self those questions ; by which you will raise from your mind the latent matter, and having once got it, you may dispose of it, and put it into form afterwards.

Suppose the discovery of America by Columbus were proposed, you might put these questions upon it :—how came he to think of such an expedition ? What evidence had he to proceed upon ? Did the ancients believe any thing that might lead him to such a discovery ? What steps did he take in the affair ? How was his opinion received ? What happened to him in the attempt ? How did it succeed ? How was he rewarded afterwards ? What were the consequences of this discovery to the old world, and what farther consequences may still be expected ? When you have given a circumstantial answer to all these questions, you will have composed a methodical history of *the discovery of America*.

By this way of asking questions, a subject is drawn out, so that you may view it in all its parts, and treat of it with little difficulty, provided you have acquired a competent knowledge of it by reading or discoursing about it in time past : if not, *ex nihilo nil sit* ; where no water is in the well, you may pump for ever without effect.

Subjects are either single or compounded ; in other words, they are either simple or complex. A single subject consists of one notion or idea, which is to be pursued in all its branches. A compound subject is a proposition, in which some one thing is affirmed of another. These two are to be treated after different methods.

If your subject is simple, you may examine it

under all the following heads, which are called *common places*; as, 1st. Its relation to the senses, affections, understandings, interests, and expressions of men. 2d. Its several kinds; which are to be described and distinguished. 3d. Its causes or principles. 4th. The effects produced by it, with the ends of good or evil which it does or should aim at. 5th. Its relation to place; which comprehends the state of it in different places, or the places which have been distinguished by it. 6th. Its relation to time; which will include the different state of your subject in different ages.

Thus, for example, suppose the subject to be treated of is *war*. 1st. It is the scourge of God upon the corruptions of mankind; and being so reputed, is never to be undertaken wantonly and unadvisedly: but as things now are, it is, in many cases, unavoidable; so that every nation should be prepared, by having their youth trained to arms, and to all manly exercises, avoiding luxury and effeminacy, by which every nation is weakened, and rendered insufficient for its own defence.

2d. There are several kinds of war: offensive and defensive; a land war and a naval war; an invasion of one's own country by a foreign enemy; but the worst of all is a civil war, in which the people turn their arms against one another, and so make themselves a prey to foreign enemies.

3d. The causes of war are the encroachments and insults of some neighbouring kingdom; a want of due authority and subordination at home; the oppression of one part of a nation by another part; improper concessions, which encourage insolence;

treaties ill advised, or not sufficiently explicit, and a want of good faith and honour in observing them.

4th. The end to be obtained by every war is peace, which is often never to be obtained by lighter methods. But too frequently, the ambition of princes tempts them to make war for the vanity of conquest, or to extend their dominions, or to take revenge upon an old enemy that has unfortunately given some advantage. In some cases, an invasion has the good effect of rousing a nation sunk in pleasure and dissipation; it brings them to their senses, and restores them, by proper exercise, to a military state.

5th. Its relation to place will give occasion to recount the most memorable wars that have been carried on in different parts of the world, and the places that have been rendered famous in history by battles, and sieges, and victories; such as the wars of Cæsar in Gaul; the battles of Cannæ and Pharsalia; the sacking of Rome by Brennus; the victory of the Christians over the Turks at Lepanto; the conquest of Mexico, and the West-Indies, &c.

6th. Its relation to time will bring in the changes that have taken place in the art of war: the different modes of fighting when the Macedonian phalanx and Roman legion were thought impregnable, from the present way of determining a battle by fire-arms and heavy artillery, which have made defensive armour useless. The difference also may be shown, so far as it is understood, between the Roman galleys and a British man of war.

Thus you see, that, by pursuing one simple idea under the several common places above mentioned,

we are led through the whole subject, and may soon throw together so many hints, that it would require a folio volume to handle them all distinctly. But here let me admonish you, that it requires more skill, and learning, and judgment, to contract a subject, than to expand it; and he is the best composer who knows how to prune away all superfluous matter.

If your subject is compound, or made up of more notions than one, it forms a *proposition*, in which some one thing is predicated (as the logicians speak), of another; as, “war is evil; old wine is better than new; old friends are better than new; old music is better than new; old divinity is better than new;” and such like. Here you have a matter *proposed*, which it is your business to *prove* and *illustrate*. In this case, your best method is,

1st. To open and explain the sense of your proposition, and distinguish your subjects, if necessary, from other subjects allied to it.

2d. To give a reason or two, to prove the truth of the proposition.

3d. To confirm your reasons by some observation on men and manners, some proverbial sentence, expressing the public judgment of mankind upon the case, or some sentiment from an author of established reputation.

4th. To illustrate your subject with a simile, which is no other than some parallel case in nature; and this you are to apply to the different parts of your subject, if it is so apposite as to admit of such an accommodation.

5th. To add an example either from ancient or modern history, or from your own experience.

6th. Then, lastly, you are to sum up your matter, and show the practical use of it ; concluding with some pertinent exhortation.

This is the easiest way of treating a subject, and the most effectual. When I was taught to make a theme at school, we had a model of a theme of this construction composed by Mr. Dryden, which was the pattern we were obliged to follow ; and I wish I could give you a copy of it. *Method* is the *light* of a subject, and *expression* is the *life* of it : and, in my judgment, an *immethodical* piece is worse than an *ill-written* one. The art is, to use method, as builders do a scaffold, which is to be taken away when the work is finished : or, as good workmen, who conceal the *joints* in their work, so that it may look smooth and pleasant to the eye, as if it were all made of one piece.

Cicero, in his Orations, speaking generally as a lawyer, pleads for the lawfulness of some fact, or against its unlawfulness. He begins with preparing his hearers for the subject ; either winning their attention by a modest approach, or showing them how they are interested in what he has to propose to them.

In the next place, he proceeds to state the case, and lays the facts before them, with all their circumstances ; or such at least as make for his purpose. This is called the *narration*.

Then he descends to *reason* upon the case ; either justifying his client, or refuting the arguments on the other side. The justification and the refutation generally make two separate articles. If his speech is of the accusatory kind, his method is still the same, *mutatis mutandis*.

After all, he sums up the merit in a conclusion, which is called *peroratio*, because it reviews the several parts of the whole oration, and presses the audience with the force of the evidence, that their judgment may go with his side of the question.

Many sermons in the English language are some of the finest orations in the world. They are of different sorts ; some are *moral*, some *controversial*, and some *expository* : the latter are of more general use, because they take in the two other divisions of moral and controversial, as occasion requires.

Under the first head of a discourse, the subject is opened, with some general observations, and distinguished.

Under the second, it is explained and illustrated.

Under the third, the uses are shown, and the inferences deduced, as they follow naturally from the most interesting parts of the exposition.

A sermon written after this, or some like method, will be clearly understood, and easily remembered. Besides, when a thought stands in its right place, it has ten times more force than when it is improperly connected. Compositions are like machines, where one part depends upon another ; if any part gets out of place, the motion is disordered, and the whole is of less effect. A rhapsody of miscellaneous thoughts, huddled together in the way of an unconnected essay, with no particular relation to the text, either makes no impression at the time when it is delivered, or leaves no instruction behind it. Not every musician who can make a noise, and show slight of hand upon an instrument, is fit

for a composer of music ; neither is every man who can *think* with freedom, able to *write* with good effect.

The three different sorts of composition in prose, are the narration, the epistle, and the speech. Narration should consist of long and clear periods, descriptive of facts, with reflections sparingly intermixed. The epistle is distinguished by short sentences, and an easy unaffected manner. Method is here of no great value. Speeches are different from both, consisting of reasonings, apologies, defences, accusations, refutations, and such like, enforced and ornamented as much as may be with the figures of rhetoric properly introduced ; of which I shall endeavour to give you an explanation at some other opportunity.

XX.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN GOING INTO THE ARMY.

WHAT figure can you make in any state of life, unless you adopt some certain rules for the regulation of your conduct ? Wisdom lives by rule, and folly lives by chance ; and this is the chief difference there is betwixt them. Such rules, therefore, as may be useful to you in the profession you are now going to take upon you, I shall give you freely, so far as they are known to me : the success must depend upon your own attention.

Do not imagine then, that because you are going to put on a sword, you may therefore throw aside your books. The army, I know, differs very much

from the university, and has many gentlemen, who think they have no great occasion for learning : but be assured of this—that the learned will have the advantage of the ignorant in all the departments of public life. There are times and seasons, when they who know less, be their fortune and station what it will, must come to those who know more ; and natural abilities, be they never so great, will always do better with information than without it. I would therefore advise you by all means to keep up your Greek, Latin, and French, and be adding as much as possible to your stock of philosophy and history ; the uses of which are too extensive for me to enlarge upon. Some of the best scholars have been the best soldiers ; as you know from the examples of Xenophon and Julius Cæsar. I gave an instance of general Wolfe's literature, and the advantage he derived from it, in another letter. You have read Cæsar's Commentaries familiarly as a school-boy ; consider them again as a soldier : and if you have French enough, as I hope you have, you will find the French Polybius, with Folard's Commentaries, an excellent work for teaching the art of war. But the best elementary treatise is that of Vegetius, whose Military Institutions comprehend the discipline of the Roman armies, and the economy of their generals. His work is addressed to the emperor Valentinian ; but his matter is collected from more ancient writers. It has been very well translated of late years into English. I wish every young officer in the army were as fond of this book, and as well acquainted with it, as I am.

As there are many different principles espoused

in this country; some of them very dangerous to the commonwealth; you are to remember, that the grand object to a soldier is the just right of his king and country; and that if he loses his life in the pursuit of that object, he dies in a good cause. In all your sentiments, be true to the side of government and authority. Practice will soon show you the absolute necessity of obedience in an army; and it is as necessary to the welfare of the state. When the power of government declines, and the reverence due to authority no longer prevails among the people, a nation is in the condition of a lunatic, who has lost his reason, the governing principle: and as you read of a certain dæmoniac, that he was *crying and cutting himself with stones*; just so is it with the country that is falling into anarchy: nothing is to be heard but the outcries and yellings of faction; and the hands of the people are turned against the people, to grind, and torment, and destroy themselves. We are now a distressed country: our wants are great, and our resources not improving; our enemies are many, and our friends are few: and yet it is my sincere opinion, that the worst evils the land suffers, or will suffer, are from itself; and for these there can be no remedy, till better principles shall take place amongst us, and public spirit, which is now dead, shall revive again.

That you may be able, in body as well as mind, to go through the duties of your profession, you must also remember, that the first qualification necessary in a soldier, is to endure hardness; and he that would suffer least by hard accidents and trying occasions, will find it his wisdom, as well as his duty, to keep himself in continual practice. The

common men, who must endure many and great hardships, are never so well reconciled to them as when they see that their officer does not spare himself; who will thus secure their respect, and win upon their affections; and then there will be a mutual confidence in the time of danger.

Charles the Twelfth of Sweden quieted a mutiny that was beginning in his army by eating some bread that was mouldy, without making a wry face at it. He owned it was not very good, but proved, that it might be eaten, by his own example; and then his soldiers had nothing more to say.

The great point with all persons in office, is to act with temper and steadiness; to show that they are not influenced by pride and ill nature, but only by a sense of duty. When a man seems to think of himself more than of his business, his authority either loses ground or becomes odious. All this may be attended to by an officer, without incurring the suspicion of meanness or weakness: it will, on the contrary, demonstrate a firmness of mind, and show that he is fit to command others who can thus command himself.

Drunkenness is a vice so much below a gentleman, that I hope you will want but little advice on that head. Every school-boy that makes a theme will be able to tell you why soldiers ought to be sober. He that is in liquor has lost his strength, and will easily be worsted by an antagonist of inferior ability. When drink takes away reason, a man is off his guard, and becomes a traitor against himself: he is like one who has permitted the enemy to shoot his sentinel. History will inform you how

armies have fallen a prey when they were besotted with liquor ; and there have been instances, when a subtle enemy has drawn an army into their own ruin by some stratagem for intoxicating them ; as we kill vermin by baiting a trap.

In your dress, be neither slovenly nor fanciful. Slovenliness in the person generally denotes some defect in the mind and understanding : and as to foppishness, it is a sad mistake, when he who should be a soldier, forgets that he is a man.

With regard to your behaviour in company (which will now be of a new sort), the best general rule I can give, and which I would advise you to carry with you every where, is, not to talk too much nor too fast ; for the one will be apt to make you troublesome, and the other may bring you into danger. A youth of too many words will let his tongue outrun his wit ; and when he pushes on too hastily, he will fall into some embarrassment with his company, where he may neither know how to proceed with safety, nor retreat with dignity. Recommend yourself, if you possibly can, to some old respectable officer of your corps, who may admonish you with the freedom of a friend and the authority of a father, if you should be guilty of any little mistakes at first, from accidental levity or inexperience. Here my subject brings the practice of duelling into sight—a practice too horrible to be reformed by the pen. No Roman ever thought of this foolish expedient for determining a private dispute : they made it a principle to reserve their swords, to be turned against the enemies of their country ; and you have a pleasant example of this in the story of

Pulsio and Varenus, two of Cæsar's centurions in Gaul, who had always been quarrelling, and yet never dreamed of drawing their swords upon one another. They leaped from the ramparts, to show which was the best man in a dispute with a crowd of enemies; and so it happened, that they both retreated with equal honour; each having had the opportunity of saving the other's life. The practice of aiming at the life of a fellow-soldier for an insignificant affront, arose from the savage custom of *trial by battle*, which the law anciently allowed, though wise and good men always detested and remonstrated against it as a disgrace to a Christian country. Till the authority of government shall effectually interpose, it is as vain to think of writing against duels, as it would be to throw an ink-bottle at a water-spout, which can be dispersed only by the shock of a cannon. To you in particular I shall observe, that though your father might be ready to resign you in the way of your duty, and for the good of your country; it would probably break his heart if you were to fall in a private dispute; and if you should ever be the unhappy instrument of sending some thoughtless companion out of life, it might break your own heart.

Upon the whole, there is certainly nothing like a proper mixture of religion in a military character, to keep a man within the lines of prudence and safety. And soldiers may have religion as well as other men; why else did the providence of God select Cornelius the centurion as the first gentile convert to the Gospel? Devotion never appears with more dignity, than in a person whose profession

places him above the imputation of a superstitious fear. I was never more pleased with any spectacle that occurred to me abroad, than when I saw many venerable gray-headed soldiers, the relics of battles and sieges, in the great hospital of invalids at Paris, dispersed about different quarters of their chapel, and all engaged in their own private devotions, at a common hour of the day. If it were required to add the greatest possible dignity to a soldier already qualified in other respects, I would put this motto upon him, "*Je crains Dieu, et je n'ai point d'autre crainte,*"—I fear God, and I have no other fear.

XXI.

ON THE PRACTICE OF DEVOTION.

THOUGH I take this serious subject, I shall write neither a sermon nor a lecture to you. Your own experience will bear witness to the truth of a fact which has often surprised and confounded me. Nothing demonstrates an inborn depravity in human nature so much as that dread which most young people are under lest they should be thought to say their prayers, or, what would be worst of all, discovered in the act; though prayer to God is a duty as honourable in itself as it is necessary to man. Gratitude demands that we should daily return something to the Power from whom we receive all things, as life, health, strength, reason, and the capacity of enjoyment; and gratitude is a virtue which all men honour. Prudence requires that we

should keep up an interest with Him from whom we expect every thing in the time that is to come; and prudence is commendable in all. It is an honour to man that he is permitted, much more that he is invited, to address himself to his Maker. We are all desirous of being seen in the company of our betters, and speaking to them; and as God is the source of all perfection, infinite in goodness as well as greatness—where can be the harm in having it known that we are sometimes alone in his company? Every passion of the heart, and every power of the understanding—hope, fear, love, gratitude, admiration, reason, memory, judgment, all call upon us to keep up this intercourse; and yet we are ashamed of it!

I would dissect this shame if I could, and discover the causes of the distemper; but it is easier to say what it is not, than what it is. It cannot proceed from ignorance; for there is scarcely one boy in a hundred, of fifteen years of age, who does not already know nearly as much as I have here been telling him. It cannot proceed from modesty or bashfulness; because the same boy who is ashamed to say his prayers before one companion, will have the boldness to swear and talk nonsense before twenty. If it should be pleaded, that the appearance of hypocrisy is avoided, then it is to be feared the duty would be practised in hypocrisy: and what an opinion must he have of his own character, who has reason to think that the act of prayer in him must be taken for an act of dissimulation? If he thinks he is not good enough to pray to God to make him better, he must then suppose himself to

be past grace, and given over to a reprobate mind, which is a dreadful prospect.

Whatever the general reason of it may be, the fact is as I say. When the eye of one boy is upon another, it has a fascinating power, like that of a rattle-snake, to deter him from the practice of devotion : and few indeed have resolution enough to assert their right of approaching their Maker, and showing that they were born of Christian parents. And what is this fiery trial that is so terrifying ? What is it but the sneer of an idle companion—of no more force nor authority than the squalling of an infant ? Yet such is the servility of the human mind, on some occasions, that the apprehension of this has more weight than all the terrors our religion has suggested to us ; that is, than all the threatenings of provoked Omnipotence. If nature in youth were as it should be, it would be actuated on all occasions, especially on this, the greatest of all, by a principle of generosity ; and then one boy would encourage another to the practice of that duty, without which he can never expect to succeed in this world or the other. I knew one young gentleman, who had given his worthy father a promise, that he would never, upon any consideration, omit to read over some one chapter of the Bible before he went to bed ; and I have reason to think he kept his word faithfully, without failing, for several years, though the hour might be sometimes a little unseasonable : he is now risen to be one of the first characters in the state, and has done service to his country in almost every department of it.

In turning this matter over a little farther in my

thoughts, it occurs to me, that none of the passions have so quick a feeling, and will bear touching so little, as pride ; and that pride is always applied to, for the exciting of those vain terrors which get the better of devotion. “ Why,” says one, “ you won’t do so ? They’ll laugh at you.” The power of this shallow artifice over the mind is inexpressible. The courage is blasted ; and even common sense is put to flight : for what becomes of his wit, who hazards the loss of all things, and chooses to be really dishonourable, lest he should be apparently ridiculous ?

From the whole case, this reflection arises ; that no man can be a Christian, and perform his duty to God, until he can bear to be laughed at. This is the first victory the mind is to obtain over the world : and till it is obtained, no good can possibly be done. Yet, in some natures, the struggle will be very sharp ; and I make no doubt but that there are many young gentlemen in the army, to whom it would be less trouble to face a cannon, than to stand the effect of a grin from a silly companion on a principle of devotion.

A popular preacher began his discourse with observing, that “ Prayer is a natural duty :” and thus far the observation might be true, that the duty of prayer may be inferred and enforced on the principles of what we call natural reason ; but whether the practice is natural to man, let any person judge when he has weighed the following fact, which was well remarked by the author of the *Adventurer*—that beggars, in the middle of the winter, will sit freezing upon the stone steps at a church door all the

time of divine service, rather than take shelter within it, on the disagreeable condition of joining in the devotions of the place. If he has an opportunity, let him also mark the behaviour of the boys of a public school, when they are all together at the church; and then let him determine whether prayer, in a practical sense, is a natural duty.

XXII.

ON PARTIES.

You hear much of parties, and you complain that you can learn very little about their principles, though they have so much to say against one another. The pretensions of different parties are frequently brought into question in a great assembly, where you may possibly have a personal concern hereafter in the business of your country; and therefore you are certainly right in desiring to understand what they are. Some, you say, are called Whigs, some Tories; some affect to be neutral, declaring against all parties, and saying, that men differ with one another only about words and names. Some say, Tories out of place are Whigs, and Whigs in place are Tories: which is to say, that there is no principle amongst us but that of self-interest; and thus you are left in total darkness as to the proper differences in opinion by which parties are guided.

The terms Whig and Tory are nick-names, with which the two parties of republicans and loyalists

pelted one another, with great animosity, in the reign of Charles the Second, and are scarcely worth an explanation. To cut the matter as short as I can, and give you a general idea of their different views in a short compass, I must tell you, that these two parties take different sides in the great question concerning the origin of civil government. Some say, government is of God; by which it is meant, that his authority, in a certain sense, must take place in civil society, for its order and support; as his power prevails in the constitution of nature: and they say, there are difficulties in the subject, which can never be got over on any other supposition. Others say, that government is a human institution, and that all the power by which governors act, is derived from those who are governed; as if you should say, that the captain of the ship has his commission from the crew.

They who espouse this latter opinion, have endeavoured to clear the way to it by laying down four other very extraordinary propositions, which are these following:—

First, that there was a time when there was no society amongst men, but they wandered about in a state of savage equality, as companions to the beasts, such as the poet describes them:

Cum prorepserunt primis animalia terris,
Mutum et turpe pecus———

Hor. Sat. i. 3.

Secondly, that by some one wiser than the rest they were collected by degrees into society, and began to form a political body.

Thirdly, that when men could not be kept to their duty, they began to enact laws to keep them in order.

Fourthly, that when it was found by experience, that laws might be evaded by offences committed without witnesses, they endeavoured to work a persuasion in men's minds, that there was an invisible Being, who could see into men's hearts, and would punish offences in another life ; and thus the exigences of society would lead naturally to the invention of religion.

Not one of these propositions can be proved by any evidence of reason or history. As to the first of them, if ever there was a time when men were savage, those men were in a state of degeneracy, and had lost the benefits of society.

As to the second, men were not originally collected into society, because they are in it by nature ; inasmuch as all larger societies must have subsisted at first in single families, which would increase naturally into more extensive communities. To prevent that state of equality, which is merely ideal, and never existed any where upon earth, a man and his wife, who are the rudiments of all larger society, were brought together with unequal powers ; the wife being the weaker by nature, and subject to the husband ; and the children, who follow the condition of the mother, are subject to the same authority. A learned and useful author, with whom you are acquainted, to avoid the force of this argument, is driven to the necessity of supposing that the wife hath an authority over the husband, as the husband hath over the wife : but the con-

trary is self-evident; and therefore government arises of course from the condition of human nature; it is a necessary consequence of that natural law by which mankind is multiplied. The father of the family is the natural ruler of it; and none can be so absurd, as to suppose that the father derives his power from the children who are begotten of him: that power is the gift of his Maker, and follows by necessity from the order of nature.

You will find a great advantage, and avoid infinite confusion, by thus considering government in its actual rudiments: for all great things are best understood by considering them under their smallest forms—*maxima e minimis*: and till you can find some way of reducing complicated cases to simple ideas, you will scarcely be able to understand any thing clearly.

As to the third proposition, that laws were prior to religion, it is contrary to reason, and to all positive testimony. It is contrary to reason, because the obligation of religion is greater than that of law, extending to all cases, as well secret as open: it therefore supersedes the use of laws, which are made only for the ungodly; for people who either have no religion, or wilfully transgress what they have. Religion, therefore, is prior, as the more compendious and powerful obligation.

The proposition is also contrary to positive testimony; because even heathens allow that religion was before law. We read of religion, and of religious institutions, in Homer; and that kings have their power, honour, and support from God: but we read of no laws then in being: the term is not

used in Homer's writings. The words of Justin are remarkable—*Populus nullis legibus tenebatur : arbitria principum pro legibus erant**; and I look upon this fact as a collateral proof, that all government subsisted at first in families, and increased from domestic into national; for who but a father can want no more law than that of natural affection for the government of his household and descendants? and what subjects, but children, either would or could submit, by choice, to be governed by the will of another? So far as laws look upwards, they were made first in popular states, to bind those governors who had no natural affection for those who were subject to them. People who think they have nothing to expect either from the principles or the affections of their rulers, will be upon their defence, and bind them as fast as they can: though mutual suspicion is productive of evils too many to be enumerated. You may have a view of them, if you read a discourse by Swift (one of the best he ever wrote) on the contests and dissensions in Athens and Rome: it will show you what is meant by a balance of power—that the many may be tyrants, as well as a single person—how mercenary orators have inflamed the people to their own ruin—how popular jealousies and tumults have led naturally to arbitrary power, &c.

Then, fourthly, that religion arose from the exigences of society, and was a political invention, brought in aid to the inefficacy of laws—is the falsest of all: for the proof of a God was in the

* Justin, lib. i. cap. 1

works of the creation, prior to all law, and, therefore, could never arise from political necessity. Even to this day we find a sense of religion, such as it is, and some regard to the obligations of it, in those nations which have neither laws nor writing amongst them.

This system of policy, to which some great names have given a sanction, is wrong in every step of its reasoning. And here I must observe besides, that there is a case of capital consideration, for which it has no provision. Every government must exercise a power of life and death; a power which no government can derive from human authority, because no man has a power over his own life, and cannot be said to give to another what he hath not in himself: so that this power can be derived only from God, who being the author of man's life, has a right to dispose of it.

An author, who belongs to the class of the *Nouveaux Philosophes*, endeavours to solve this difficulty on his own principles, in an Essay on Crimes and Punishments. He seems well inclined to give to every man the disposal of his own life, by his calling self-murder a *voluntary migration*, as when a man leaves his parish, or goes off as a member of some new colony. But if this should be insufficient, he argues farther, that although the power of life and death is not in any individual taken separately, yet the aggregate body may have it when they are all taken together; which, in effect, is the same as to argue, that though one cipher has no value, a great many ciphers together will make a sum.

You will find this power of the multitude a no-

tion big with absurdity, and which can never be reduced to practice, because it implies a contradiction. You must suppose that the whole aggregate of the people are unanimous, who never yet united in any one act since the beginning of the world. If they are divided, then their power is the power of the people over the people; it is the power of Peter over John, and of John over Peter; and can never be settled, till one of them has either destroyed the other, or deprived him of his liberty.

Thus I have sketched out for you the ground of dispute between the two parties who have made most noise in the kingdom. I shall neither trace the effects of their different principles, nor give you any reflections upon their characters, as that would carry me out too far, and be an invidious undertaking. So far as we have now gone, it is the part of every good subject to go, who has capacity and opportunity. It happens that the origin of civil government is a subject which of late has been incomparably treated in a learned and elegant discourse, by my excellent friend Dr. Horne, president of Magdalen College in Oxford* (now dean of Canterbury), to which I must refer you for farther information. There you will find every thing that learning and moderation can pertinently introduce; or, at least, that need be said, for the settling of the question. It will give you satisfaction, in point of argument; and the composition, while it instructs you in your duty, will improve your English.

* See Discourses on several Subjects and Occasions, vol. ii. disc. 12.

XXIII.

ON THE CHARACTER OF VOLTAIRE.

IF a wicked writer is not a witty one, he will do but little mischief; for poison is never swallowed, as such, but in a fit of despair. Wit may conspire with truth to give us pleasure, as wholesome wine may be brought to table in the richest vessel; but wit, when possessed by men of bad principles, recommends falsehood, as poison is offered to us in a gilded cup :

————— Nulla aconita bibuntur
 Fictilibus. Tunc illa time, cum pocula sumes
 Gemmata, et lato setinum ardebit in auro.
Juv. Sat. x.

Truth in literature is the same thing with honesty in common life. You may admire an ingenious man; but you would wish always to be concerned with an honest one: indeed no man can be safe in any other company. If a great genius is dishonest, his ingenuity only renders him the more dangerous: and it is to no purpose to tell us that he is a man of parts; because none but a man of parts can corrupt the public with much success. No sharper, properly so called, can possibly be a fool. He that lives by his wits, must have some wits to live by: and every sharper, in proportion as he is more artful and insinuating in company, is so much the worse man. We should think it a very sense-

less apology for a highwayman, or a cheat, to say that he is a man of genius. His talents may recommend him to rogues like himself; and they will set him at their head for his accomplishments; but his eminence in his profession will be no recommendation with honest people, who, if they fall into his company, have nothing to do but to look to their pockets.

In this light I have been used to consider the celebrated M. Voltaire. I am pleased with a man of wit, and I admire a scholar, wherever I find him; but, at the same time, I abhor a cheat: and if he that robs a man of his money, and hinders the success of his neighbours, is detestable in society; he that would rob us of the truth, or render us unfit to receive it, is a worse character. If it is his first wish to deprive us of that truth which relates to our interests in another life, then he differs from an evil spirit in nothing but the inferiority of his abilities.

If M. Voltaire should be recommended to you by any of his friends and admirers, or any of his seducing publications should fall in your way (which some Englishmen have been very forward to translate), it is proper you should know what you are to expect, that you may be prepared against the ill effects of them; and possibly you may have some opportunity of rescuing others from the snares of his sophistry.

I lately met with two volumes of a work in French, entitled *Les Erreurs de Voltaire*. They are written by the Abbé Nounette, a moderate and candid writer, whose remarks have gone through many editions at Paris; and I wish they were

translated into English. In a preliminary discourse to the work, he has drawn the literary character of Voltaire with great calmness and judgment ; allowing him all the merit he could justly claim, and distinguishing properly between his excellences and his errors. From this preliminary discourse I shall give you a pretty large extract in another letter.

XXIV.

ON THE SAME.

THOUGH I could indulge myself with a quire of criticism on M. Voltaire, I rather choose to give you something at present in the more humble character of a translator ; and if it does not run off so smoothly as an original composition might do, that you must excuse. We take, or seem to take, the sentiments of another with more impartiality than we advance our own ; and, in the present case, I apprehend you will suffer nothing by the exchange

“ Perhaps it would be difficult,” says the Abbé Nonnette, “ to find in any age, a man of such great abilities and extensive knowledge as M. Voltaire. I think there never was his parallel. He was ignorant of no kind of literature ; he wrote upon every thing : and though he may have fallen short of perfection in some of his productions, yet there is a variety of fancy which always discovers a superiority of genius. At the time of life when other young men are obliged to receive lectures

from those who are wiser than themselves, he published those poetical essays which soon made him known all over France. From the pieces he wrote for the theatre, it was the general opinion, that under the reign of Louis XV. there was no occasion to lament the loss of those great writers, Corneille and Racine, whose productions had done so much honour to the reign of Louis XIV.

“ His works are distinguished by that brilliancy of wit, that fire and elegance of expression, which is not to be acquired by the most intense application : it is the effort of genius, and the gift of nature. After a few years, when his judgment was more mature, he ventured upon philosophy, and treated of it as if he had been nothing but a philosopher ; while his poetry would have tempted one to believe he had studied nothing but poetry all his life. But his thoughts were not confined to these : he studied history and criticism ; and made observations on the manners and principles of mankind. He attempted every thing, and his genius carried him through ; and notwithstanding numberless small errors, one may every where trace the genius of Voltaire.

“ A knowledge of books, too extensive to have been properly digested, with an indefatigable ardour of mind, and an extraordinary memory, emboldened him to write on all kinds of subjects. A descriptive imagination gave that force to his style, which made ample amends for the want of some lesser graces. The energy of his expressions, his striking contrasts, and the variety of objects he brings together to set off one another, surprise and

engage his readers, even while they disbelieve what they are reading. This is what we are authorised to say of M. Voltaire's style.

“ For all these talents united, he was regarded as the prodigy of the age in which he lived. He might have been the idol of it; but the frequent abuse of his talents, his extravagant assertions, with that superior tone and dictatorial carriage which he always affected over those who cultivated the sciences and belles lettres, raised him more enemies, censurers, and rivals, than ever he had admirers.

“ The human mind has powers with which it can raise itself to the most sublime speculations : but then there are rules to which it must be subservient, and boundaries to which it ought to confine itself. Some wits are equally bold and happy in their attempts ; while others are absolutely rash and inconsiderate. It was M. Voltaire's misfortune to be too ambitious of exalting himself to the top of every thing, though with the neglect of those good rules and necessary regulations. A judicious reader will therefore immediately discover that the author has no fixed principles ; that he has no sound logic ; that he is often without true learning ; always without discretion and a proper respect to things of the last importance. He will see through all those lively sallies of wit, those bold reflections, and that varnish which is so artfully spread over all his writings. These are ornaments which may dazzle and surprise light and superficial understandings incapable of reflection ; but will make very little impression on those who are able to look farther, and judge properly.

“ M. Voltaire is always most extravagant when religion comes in his way ; and to this great object we shall confine ourselves. Religion is that alliance and society which subsists between God and man ; a society which brings with it the greatest advantages to mankind, and lays them under the highest obligations : a man, truly wise and reasonable, finds nothing upon this earth so worthy of his love and veneration. Here all false principles and rash assertions are infinitely dangerous ; and they are more particularly so, when they are presented in a form which flatters the pride of the human understanding ; when they seem to be the offspring of truth, reason, and even wisdom itself. It is a matter of great concern to detect the falsehood of such principles, and to trace the consequences which follow them ; consequences, which at best are ridiculous, and sometimes exceedingly shocking : and, lastly, to learn how to distinguish, in such serious subjects, between truth itself, and that which has only the appearance of it.

“ There is scarcely any one piece of M. Voltaire, in which he has not meddled with religion ; and not one in which he has treated it with any respect. He has spoke of it as a poet, an historian, and a philosopher ; never as a Christian. Some profane liberties are taken in most of his poetical pieces. His General History is nothing but a satire, in which the bitterness of calumny most commonly takes the place of truth : and in his Philosophical Miscellanies, where he is more of a sceptic than Bayle, he opposes all true principles, and pleads in defence of all errors.

“ Yet I must own, he never makes a direct at-

tack upon the truth of Christianity: his method is rather to employ all the force of his wit in support of those errors which Christianity condemns. With him, the philosophers who are called Materialists, are a sort of men void of all prejudices, who only wish to conduct themselves according to the light of nature. He brings in their arguments; weighs their reasons; admires the force of them; and pronounces them to be unanswerable: then he gives a pompous list of those famous philosophers who have been materialists; puts in some of the fathers of the church amongst them; and there he leaves his reader.

“All reasonable men must reckon the doctrine of fatality or destiny amongst the worst reveries of philosophy. A blind fate, which draws after it all human events; which leaves nothing to the wisdom and prudence of man; and with which all created beings are but as the springs of a machine; such a sort of destiny is a contemptible absurdity, as inconsistent with reason as with religion. It is impossible that M. Voltaire could believe such an absurdity as this, which could only take possession of a stupid Hottentot or blind Mussulman. This, however, is the subject of most of the allegorical pieces in his Miscellanies, and of those reflections which occur so frequently in his General History. A wise man must despise them; a weak man may be ensnared by them; and here the libertine finds an authority for all his extravagances.

“But, most dangerous of all, because it is best calculated to seduce people, is his way of treating religious worship, the exercises of piety, the government of the church, and the institution of its

ministry. Here he employs all his wit and satire, his grave arguments, and his solemn declamations, to inspire contempt and aversion for every thing of this kind. All that has been written against the Christian or the Catholic religion by libertines, and those modern authors who give themselves the pompous name of philosophers, this he industriously quotes ; endeavouring to make the wit more pointed, and the ridicule more outrageous. All those who are devoted to religion, or engaged in the service of it, appear to him as a set of useless mortals, who are either insignificant or vicious. If they have merit, talents, or virtues ; if they have done, or now do, any service to the public ; he robs them of it all, and conceals it in every picture he has drawn of their characters. But he takes special care that the world shall be perfectly acquainted with all their passions, vices, and follies, by which they have dishonoured themselves and their profession : these are the only things he dwells upon ; and from hence he takes occasion to pronounce against them all.

“ With M. Voltaire, the whole service of religion is nothing but superstition : he excepts nothing ; he respects nothing. Sometimes he amuses himself with a picturesque description of the ridiculous mortifications of a *Faquir* or a *Dervise* ; but the allusion is always plain enough : a reader may perceive, at first sight, that he has nothing to do but to change the name, and that the raillery is all pointed against devout Christians. Sometimes, under another allusion, as intelligible as the former, he pretends to show, that nothing but the folly of superstition can offer sacrifices, vows, and prayers to God for the obtaining of what we want. Because

the church does not furnish its altars with opera-girls, and those virtuous heroines who tread the stage, and contribute in more ways than one to the amusement of the public, M. Voltaire abuses the whole nation as weak, foolish, and superstitious : in a word, nothing was ever worse contrived, in his opinion, than the ecclesiastical councils, and nothing can be more unreasonable than submission to any of their determinations. He finds that Pagans were always wiser, in leaving all men at liberty to think as they pleased in matters of religion. Yet, in his miscellanies of philosophy and literature, his whole business is to insult religion and all religious people : and his General History was intended for nothing else but to make religion odious : there, with every intemperate sally of licentiousness, and a vain ostentation of a superior taste for philosophy, he empties his quiver against it. The work is a series of calumnies, false accusations, outrageous exaggerations, and artificial concealments, to bring disgrace upon Christianity. Authors, who are either contemptible, or of suspicious characters, if they are but enemies to religion, immediately turn into oracles with M. Voltaire. Pagans and Mussulmen are always sure to make their party good against Christians. All that has been invented and propagated by idolatry, heresy, and imposture, against the worshippers of Jesus Christ ; all that has been said in defence of tyrants, who were the enemies and persecutors of the church—M. Voltaire revives, and reports it as authentic : but whatever he meets with to the advantage of Christians, in authors of established merit and reputation, he either suppresses, or, if he mentions it, it is disguised

with such a cloud of criticism, that readers have no chance with him, unless they are aware of his artifices, and well acquainted with the subject beforehand.

“ Actuated, as he is, by this spite against the Christian religion, he gives you long details of historical events; and his representations are always unfaithful. All the commotions, and tumults, and disorders, with which the world has been troubled, are laid to the score of Christians: their virtues are travestied into vices; their devotion is all weakness and folly; and their slightest faults are exaggerated into unpardonable crimes.

“ But he does not treat Mahometans and Pagans in this manner: these are not the colours in which they are represented. If ever there have been any real virtues among mankind, any wisdom, any reason, any justice, M. Voltaire can find it no where but amongst infidels and idolaters; there we must look for all our great men, our great geniuses, and real heroes. If the Protestants are ever so fortunate as to obtain his good word, this never happens but when he sets them in opposition to the Catholics: and if he is obliged to give some testimony to any of the great men we have had amongst us, he takes care to qualify their virtues with their faults, and throws in something in such a fashion as to unsay what he had seemed to allow.

“ If any person undertakes to give us a knowledge of men, the laws of history require, that he should describe them as they are, by their good qualities and their defects, their vices and their virtues. To show us only one side of them, is to be an unfaithful historian. Yet this is M. Voltaire's unfair way

of writing history: he shows us Christians only by their faults and their vices; Pagans, Mahometans, and heretics, only by their good qualities and great talents.

“We must likewise observe, that this indefatigable zeal to worry the Catholic religion, and defame all those that profess and regard it, does by no means prove that he would be inclined to give better quarter to any other religion. His taste is for nothing but total indifference (which we call latitudinarianism) and universal toleration. According to him, all true philosophy consists in boasting of universal benevolence; in uttering grand sentiments of probity, justice, and honour; and then, for all the rest, to set ourselves above all opinions, doctrines, and articles of faith: to believe what we please, or to believe nothing at all.

“There is no set of men, of whom he gives us so favourable a character as of these tolerant philosophers; none whom he presents to us under such an amiable and respectable character. He always describes them as men of a milky sweetness, who breathe nothing but peace and gentleness; who neither condemn, nor blame, nor find fault with any body; men, who leave to all others the liberty of thinking as they please; and who desire nothing, but that all men should show the same reasonable indulgence toward them, as they show to others. These good gentlemen demand nothing but liberty to *think*; that is to say, (for you must understand them right) they only demand a liberty to insult society, and mock at all religion with impunity; to propagate all manner of blasphemies that are scandalous and injurious to the Christian faith; and to

publish the wildest absurdities, in order to corrupt the opinions and morals of Christian people. And all these demands M. Voltaire finds to be very just and reasonable, and endeavours to prove them so in a thousand passages of his writings ; especially in his poem on the Law of Nature, his Discourse on the Soul, and his magnificent Panegyric upon Locke.

“ This boldness, which pays no respect to religion, is under as little restraint in regard to the power and authority of kings. This great philosopher is no more fit to teach men to be good subjects, than devout Christians. In his works, few rebellions are spoken of, which he does not either approve or palliate. Those maxims, which relate to a natural equality amongst men, are so equivocal in themselves, and dangerous to government, that they ought never to be treated of but by men of wisdom and moderation, who can confine themselves within due bounds, and make proper distinctions. Sometimes, these maxims are the language of nature and reason ; and sometimes they are the cries of popular rage and sedition. M. Voltaire treats of them without either precaution or limitation : and there is much more of insidious affectation, than of truth and reason, in all those representations, which he so often delights to make, of the terrors of despotism, and the advantages of liberty. If justice and humanity are sometimes wanting toward the people in those who govern them ; they who are so industrious to infuse fears and suspicions, and to spread seditious opinions among them, will rarely mend the matter ; but serve, in the issue, to make the people more unhappy than ever. Religion gives

us better lessons for this purpose, and much wiser too, than all the boasted maxims of the modern philosophy.

“ When a man assumes the haughty airs of this author, and listens to nothing but the suggestions of his own fancy, he takes upon him to correct those notions which are common to all mankind; to dispute self-evident principles; to contradict opinions established on the best authority; and deny facts which have been incontestably proved. When he sets himself up as a sovereign judge of parts and genius, of all writings and all sciences, of all parts and all learning, he must then be in danger of falling into frequent contradictions and palpable blunders. Many are the rocks on which such a bold adventurer may split; and it has not been M. Voltaire’s good fortune to escape them.”

After this, the learned Abbé proceeds to point out some of those instances in which M. Voltaire has contradicted himself; of which I shall give you a specimen in another letter.

XXV.

ON THE SAME.

I SHALL trouble you no farther with M. Voltaire, when I have added an example or two of those frequent contradictions which occur in his writings, that you may have an idea of his peculiar genius for falsification.

“ It is rather wonderful,” says our learned Abbé, “ that with such lively parts, and such a powerful

memory, M. Voltaire should have fallen into such manifest contradictions.

“ In his General History,* he tells us, it never was the principle of the Roman senate or the emperors to persecute any body for the sake of their religion; that the Christian church had its freedom from the beginning; that it was permitted to extend itself, and was even protected publicly by several of the emperors.

“ But in his History of the Age of Louis XIV,† he says, this same Christian church resisted the authority of the emperors from the beginning; and in defiance of all their edicts, held its private assemblies in grottos and caves of the earth, till Constantine drew it up from its habitation under ground, to place it by the side of his throne.

“ In one place he observes,‡ that human nature is every where the same at the bottom, and that nature has established a general resemblance amongst mankind: but in another place,§ that there are nations who have no common resemblance even to their next neighbours, and that probably there are different species of men, as of other animals.

“ He affirms that Michael Servetus,|| who was burned alive by order of Calvin at Geneva, denied the eternal Godhead of Jesus Christ; and in the following page, he assures us that Servetus did not deny that doctrine.

* Chap. v.

† Origine du Calvinisme.

‡ Hist. Gen. tom. iii. p. 194.

§ Ibid. p. 6.

|| Ibid. tom. iii.

“Cromwell,” according to M. Voltaire,* “bathed himself in blood after he had usurped the royal authority ; that he lived under continual apprehensions ; never slept two nights together in the same chamber, for fear of being assassinated ; and at length died of a fever occasioned by his anxiety.

“And this same Cromwell,” as M. Voltaire says again,† “was an observer of the laws, kept the people at quiet, and died with that firmness which he had showed all his life, leaving behind him the reputation of a great king, which covered the crimes of his usurpation.”

These specimens are sufficient to show you how M. Voltaire has reported things one way or the other, as it served the present argument. When he is to apologise for the cruelties of his heathen friends, Nero is transformed into a nursing-father of the church : but when the primitive Christians are to be blackened, then his heathens are restored to their proper character of persecutors, that the Christians may be represented as rebels against the imperial authority. To exculpate the heathens, he sets the church at liberty, and leaves it to spread itself abroad over the world : but to make the church insignificant, he sends it under ground ; as if Constantine had been obliged to look for Christianity where men look for rabbits, in a hole of the earth.

What I have here given may perhaps raise your curiosity to see more of the learned Abbé’s work,

* Melang. tom. i.

† Siècle de Louis XIV. chap. 5.

and follow that candid writer through the several heads of his undertaking, which, in general, is judiciously executed, and very entertaining. I hear it is procured with difficulty; and I must own, I think it rather a reproach to us, that I am obliged to send you to French writers for satisfaction in this argument. I wish some original work of the kind had appeared in our own language, in which M. Voltaire has been made to speak so largely by his English translators.

There is another celebrated work of the same sort with that of the Abbé Nonnette, called *L'Oracle des Nouveaux Philosophes*, of which he speaks with great approbation, but as pursuing a different line from his own. The *Lettres des Juifs*, I think, have been put into English; but the chief design of them is to show how grossly M. Voltaire has erred in many points of learning. Many curious anecdotes, relating to the errors of M. Voltaire's life, were sent to the Abbé Nonnette, but he excused himself from making any use of them, saying, that his temper was not turned to satire; and that so long as he could confute M. Voltaire, he had no occasion to defame him.

The portrait I gave you in my last letter will carry you beyond the person of M. Voltaire, and enable you to judge of some others by his example. This arch-deceiver has his followers, who deserve to be exposed to the world nearly as much as he does, having a tincture of his gall, and being well versed in his artifices. The logic of error has its forms, like the logic of the schools, and its rhetoric has its figures, which are adopted in common by in-

ferior practitioners. But if you see through this master of arts, you will be in less danger from the under-graduates of the same profession.

As men are by nature greedy of novelty, and listen with attention to those who have a story to tell them, provided they have a pen that can furnish out an entertaining narrative, M. Voltaire had his reasons for preferring history, as the most popular and convenient vehicle of his errors : and he found it answer. This should teach you to be upon your guard against modern writers of history ; who, if they have bad principles, will sophisticate the events and characters of history, and turn them to the same purposes as he did, to poison the minds of youth, and inflame them with notions, not more adverse to truth and piety than to the peace and prosperity of the kingdom. If you study history, either for improvement or amusement, let it be your endeavour to select those writers who were good men as well as good historians ; but be cautious how you trust yourself to a libertine : he has some ill design upon you, whether he writes from the Lake of Geneva, or from the other side of the Tweed ; and it will make no difference to you whether he is called Hume or Voltaire.

History, of late times, has been craftily used as a commodious vehicle to infidelity and sedition. I would therefore recommend to every young reader, who is capable of relishing and improving by it, what Strada, a very pleasing author, has written upon history, in his *Prolusiones Academicæ*, particularly his Second Discourse, which contains a just censure of Tacitus the historian. To this, let him take as a supplement, Hunter's Observations on Ta-

citus. Finding this book spoken of with extreme contempt, in a virulent publication, entitled *The Confessional*, a factious libel upon the church of England, I presumed there must be something very good in it, and determined to inform myself. Accordingly, I found it a very excellent and pleasant work, full of learning, spirit, good principles, and sound criticism ; so necessary to the present times, that no young person, who reads, or intends to read, history, should be without it ; and if it is become scarce, I wish it were reprinted for this good purpose.

XXVI.

ON PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

As you are intended for the church, it will be prudent to arm yourself with such considerations as may serve to keep your judgment clear and undisturbed ; that you may be easy in your mind, as well as active and serviceable in your profession. In the course of your reading, some things will probably be thrown in your way to perplex you : and I can assure you, there is nothing more likely to corrupt and weaken your judgment, than some notions which have been circulated concerning judgment itself.

The case would be thought very strange, if a man were to see the worse for studying optics : but you would wonder the less at this, if he thought he had discovered, or that somebody else had discovered for him, that the eye has no need of any external

aids for distinguishing the relations of objects, their colours, magnitudes, distances, and such like; but can see best by its own native light. Something of this kind has really befallen those, who, through vanity, self-interest, or some other mistake, have attributed so much to their own minds, that they have impaired their judgment. You will seldom fail to find in such persons a great desire to draw you over to their party, by tempting you to attribute too much to yourself, as they have done; and then they mean to take advantage of the consequences, which they understand well enough: that is, when you are grown conceited, they can lead you into their own opinions.

Every controversial writer against the doctrine or discipline of the church of England (of which the late times have unhappily produced a very great number), has much to offer in favour of the *liberty*, the *authority*, and the *rights* of *private judgment*; a sort of flattery which easily finds its way to the hearts of the young and ignorant. Pride and indolence are always forward enough to believe, without being argued into it, that they have nothing to do upon questions of the utmost importance, but to look inwards, and ask their own opinions. This persuasion precludes the use of all those qualifications with which human judgment wants to be assisted; it is an error which breeds many others, and seldom admits of reformation: for how can he be brought to see his mistake, who has made it a rule to shut his eyes?

What we call *private judgment*, is the judgment of a private person against the sense of the public, and in opposition to established laws and regula-

tions : in other words, it is the judgment of an individual against the judgment of the society to which he belongs. They say, every individual must have a liberty to exercise this judgment ; and so I say likewise : for nothing can be enacted by public authority, which private judgment cannot arraign and condemn, if it is so disposed. When public authority has determined that two and two make four, thoughts are free ; and an individual may deny that, or any other position whatever, and no law on earth can hinder him from so doing ; for no society can make a law that shall hinder a man from being a fool. For himself, and within his own mind, where every man holds an œcumenical council, he will judge of things as they appear to him, and nobody alive can help it ; and therefore, we are obliged to allow that every individual has a *liberty of private judgment*, that is, he has an actual liberty of contradicting all mankind, and of judging in opposition to all the law and all the reason in the world.

But now I must inform you, that they who have so much to urge in favour of this natural liberty, have pushed the matter farther, and argued for its *authority* ; first, with respect to a man's self ; and, secondly, with respect to the public. It has been pleaded, that a man is *justified* in his sentiments, because they are his sentiments ; and that one persuasion, so far as the man himself is concerned, is as good as another ; because he is not justified by the goodness of the *matter* believed, but by the *sincerity* with which he believes it. On which principle, lies are as good as truth, and a chimera may answer the purpose of a sacrament.

Then, with respect to the public, it has been urged, that society must have regard, in all matters of conscience, to the judgment of every individual, and establish nothing of this kind, till all the unreasonable and ignorant people in a country (and such there will be in all countries) are first agreed as to the propriety of it. Here, it is pre-supposed, as you will immediately perceive, that society has no rule to go by in matters of conscience, but their own judgment: if there is any rule which lays a common obligation on all parties, then this reasoning falls to the ground; for, by the authority of that rule, society may proceed to establish whatever is thence necessary for the good of the whole, without suspending its judgment till individuals are satisfied.

Such are the claims of this redoubtable champion called Private Judgment; which protests against all creeds, and would new-model all states: however, let us be of good courage, and take a nearer view of him.

The judgment of an individual will be weighty or insignificant, as it is the judgment of reason, or the judgment of passion. Whatever judgment a man may have formed within himself on any particular question, it must have been formed either with the means of knowledge, or without them; if without them, it is the judgment of ignorance, and is in fact not judgment, but a rash and groundless decision of the imagination: if with the means of knowledge, then we must consider what those means are.

Knowledge is conveyed to the mind either through the bodily senses, or by conversation with men, or by reading of books. There are many great sub-

jects in which a man's own apprehension and experience will carry him but a little way ; and even where experience ought to guide us, few men have spirit and industry to gather up what they learn in that manner. As to books, the majority are ignorant of languages ; without which they cannot read some, nor judge critically of others. If they are engaged in secular business, they are not at leisure ; and if they have not been brought up to literature, they are but ill prepared to take advantage of this source of information. It follows, therefore, that most of the private judgment which is found amongst mankind, is not original in themselves, though by its name it always affects to be so ; but is borrowed from the persons by whom they have been educated, or with whom they have conversed. And this observation will teach you, by the way, that error in judgment is by no means confined to the illiterate. The common people have their mistakes, which we call *vulgar errors* : but many more monstrous and dangerous opinions are taken up by men of education than by the illiterate, in whom common sense retains that native power which art hath partly extinguished in the others, by introducing false, but specious rules of judgment, several of which I could produce.

It is the fate of scholars to fall early in life into the company of their elders or their equals, from whom they imbibe a set of principles to which they are soon attached, either because those principles flatter their pride, or encourage their idleness, or agree with their inclinations and appetites ; and, unless they are blessed with natural strength of mind, and rectitude of intention, and favoured by

some happy incidents, which bring new thoughts to their minds, their reading and conversation flow generally in the same channel, throughout the whole course of their lives; they turn away with scorn from every thing that contradicts their favourite traditions; and thus they live and die the dupes of the first information they received, as do the Jews, Turks, and Gentoos. When they write books (if they commence authors), they bend and distort matters of fact, and represent all men and all things as they are seen through the medium of their own prejudices. If you attempt to reconcile such persons to any truth, you must treat them as men treat a one-eyed horse; turn their blind side toward an object, that they may go forward without starting.

It is not my design to write a satire upon mankind; I have compassion for all men in the worst of their mistakes, because they themselves are generally the greatest sufferers; but it is necessary, for your safety, that I should represent things as they are, without fear or favour; and I am not singular in my observations. Mankind are such now as they used to be formerly; and where their nature operates freely, it will act now as it did then. Cicero said, many ages ago, *Plura enim multo homines judicant odio, aut amore, aut cupiditate, aut iracundiâ, aut dolore, aut lætitiâ, aut spe, aut timore, aut terrore, aut aliâ aliquâ PERMOTIÖNE MENTIS, quam VERITATE.*—"Men are much more disposed to give their judgment of things out of hatred, or love, or inclination, or anger, or resentment, or joy, or hope, or fear, or cowardice, or any other emotion of the mind, than out of a regard to

truth." In virtue of this observation, he directs his young orator to trust the cause at last to an experiment upon the passions of his hearers. Though this is but a rule of oratory, it carries with it a reflection which bears very hard upon human nature. Hence it appears, that men are actuated, and often very violently, by a principle which has no regard to merit, truth, or justice. And now, I think, the question concerning the inherent rights of such a principle is very easily settled. Societies, who have any concern for their own welfare and safety, have nothing to do but to guard against it, and keep a jealous eye upon it; for it would confound all truth, and unhinge the world.

The grand motives on which men judge, who do not judge on principles of right reason, are custom, vanity, and self-interest. I knew a gentleman, who was allowed to be a person of piety and benevolence, and yet his example afforded a striking instance of the weakness of private judgment. When he first took the sacred function upon him, he went to reside in a city where Arianism had long been a fashionable doctrine: here he was touched with a pious indignation, like that of Paul at Athens, and "his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to heterodoxy." In the execution of his office, he gave an unpopular proof of his zeal in the congregation, which at that time was much talked of. Some time afterwards, he removed into another neighbourhood, where the clergy being generally addicted to the good old way, orthodoxy was no distinction: in this situation he became a zealous Arian; took up his pen in the cause; and I have been informed, he was a con-

siderable member among the gentlemen of the Feathers Tavern. Dr. Young calls Pride the *universal passion* : and I think we may with equal propriety say of it, that whensoever we are surprised with strange anomalies in the words and actions of men, otherwise good and virtuous, it is the *universal explanation*.

Custom is another principle which has a fatal effect in directing men's judgments, and keeping their minds in bondage. To account for their opinions, nothing more is necessary than to ask where they have been, and what they have been doing ? Trace them back to the places of their early education, and follow them from thence into their connexions in life, and you will find how they fell into their present principles. You have some knowledge of a right honourable gentleman, who is regular in his morals, and serious in his behaviour, tender to his family, generous to his friends ; and yet is perpetually struggling and raising disturbances, and perhaps would venture his head for the sake of some fantastical ideas in politics, which would be pernicious to his country, and will probably never do any good to himself. You think all this utterly unaccountable in a man who wants nothing that the world can give him ; but I will explain the whole in a few words. When he was a boy, his father sent him to a republican seminary, by the advice of a certain bishop, who was no great friend to the church of England.

It is to be numbered among the many misfortunes and miseries of human life, that men differ so widely in their judgments, and upon such slight

grounds ; but you must have patience to see this, without being corrupted or perplexed : their example is rather to be lamented than imitated ; and their opinions afford no argument against the truth. They judge according to the circumstances of their birth, parentage, and education : men always have done so, and always will, to the end of the world. If a monkey could write, and give his judgment of the constitution of the world, and the *Histoire Generale* of the animal creation, he would produce something to the following effect. He would begin with informing you, that the monkey is the original man, and man a clumsy imitation of the monkey : then he would describe the monkey nature by all its perfections ; the human by its wants and weaknesses. He would appeal to the order of nature itself, which has ordained that men shall plough the ground, and plant maize, for monkeys to come and eat it ; which proves, by the plainest of all arguments, an undeniable fact, a stubborn sort of evidence—that nature intended man for a labourer, and a monkey for a gentleman ; for nature never sent monkeys to plough. His native freedom would demonstrate a farther superiority ; for while men are gathered into societies within walls, like a fold of sheep, to be governed by laws, and driven by authority, and loaded with taxes, like beasts of burthen, every monkey is his own master, and takes possession of the woods without going to the lawyers for a title.

Thus would the private judgment of a monkey argue, in opposition to the better knowledge of the human species. By monkeys he would be heard

with applause ; and when his reputation was established as a writer, his name would be a compendious proof of his doctrine. Some things unfavourable to his system would of course be concealed : he would never tell you, that while monkeys take themselves for gentlemen, mankind shoot them for thieves, and chain them to a post for a show, amongst the other freeholders of the desert.



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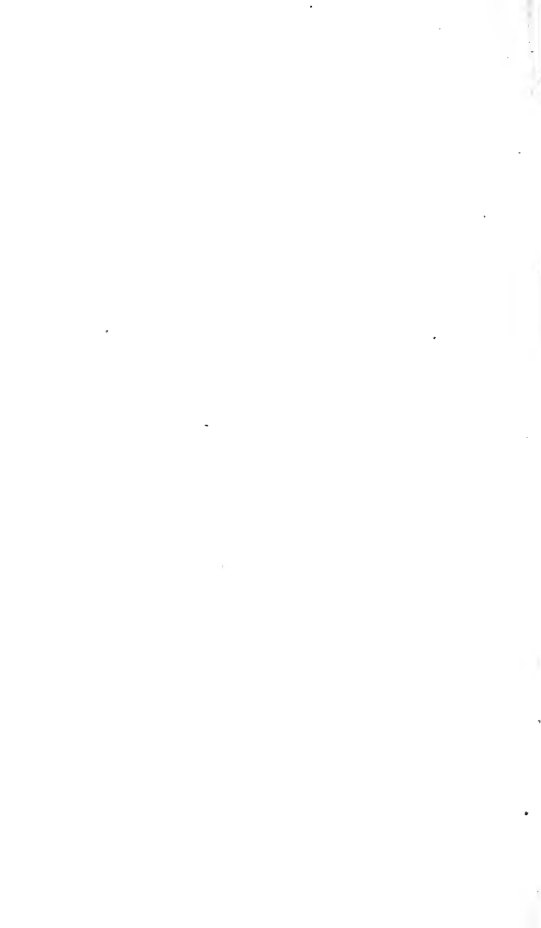
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LETTERS
ON THE
IMPROVEMENT OF THE
BY
HESTER CHAPONE.



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MRS. CHAPONE'S
LETTERS.

I.

ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION.

MY DEAREST NIECE,

THOUGH you are so happy as to have parents, who are both capable and desirous of giving you all proper instruction, yet I, who love you so tenderly, cannot help fondly wishing to contribute something, if possible, to your improvement and welfare: and, as I am so far separated from you, that it is only by pen and ink I can offer you my sentiments, I will hope that your attention may be engaged, by seeing on paper, from the hand of one of your warmest friends, truths of the highest importance, which, though you may not find new, can never be too deeply engraven on your mind. Some of them perhaps may make no great impression at present, and yet may so far gain a place in your memory, as readily to return to your thoughts when occasion

recalls them. And if you pay me the compliment of preserving my letters, you may possibly re-peruse them at some future period, when concurring circumstances may give them additional weight :—and thus they may prove more effectual than the same things spoken in conversation. But, however this may prove, I cannot resist the desire of trying, in some degree, to be useful to you, on your setting out in a life of trial and difficulty ; your success in which must determine your fate for ever.

Hitherto you have “thought as a child, and understood as a child ; but it is time to put away childish things.” You are now in your fifteenth year, and must soon act for yourself ; therefore it is high time to store your mind with those principles which must direct your conduct, and fix your character. If you desire to live in peace and honour, in favour with God and man, and to die in the glorious hope of rising from the grave to a life of endless happiness—if these things appear worthy your ambition, you must set out in earnest in the pursuit of them. Virtue and happiness are not attained by chance, nor by a cold and languid approbation ; they must be sought with ardour, attended to with diligence, and every assistance must be eagerly embraced that may enable you to obtain them. Consider, that good and evil are now before you ; that if you do not heartily choose and love the one, you must undoubtedly be the wretched victim of the other. Your trial is now begun ; you must either become one of the glorious *children of God*, who are to rejoice in his love for ever ; or a *child of destruction*—miserable in this life, and punished with eternal death hereafter. Surely you will be im-

pressed by so awful a situation ! you will earnestly pray to be directed into that road of life, which leads to excellence and happiness ; and you will be thankful to every kind hand that is held out, to set you forward in your journey.

The first step must be to awaken your mind to a sense of the importance of the task before you, which is no less than to bring your frail nature to that degree of Christian perfection, which is to qualify it for immortality ; and without which, it is necessarily incapable of happiness ; for it is a truth never to be forgotten, that God has annexed happiness to virtue, and misery to vice, by the unchangeable nature of things ; and that a wicked being (while he continues such) is in a natural incapacity of enjoying happiness, even with the concurrence of all those outward circumstances which in a virtuous mind would produce it.

As there are degrees of virtue and vice, so are there of reward and punishment, both here and hereafter : but let not my dearest niece aim only at escaping the dreadful doom of the wicked—let your desires take a nobler flight, and aspire after those transcendent honours, and that brighter crown of glory, which await those who have excelled in virtue ; and let the animating thought, that every secret effort to gain his favour is noted by your all-seeing Judge, who will, with infinite goodness, proportion your reward to your labours, excite every faculty of your soul to please and serve him. To this end, you must *inform your understanding* what you ought to *believe* and to *do*.—You must *correct* and *purify* your *heart* ; cherish and improve all its good affections, and continually mortify and

subdue those that are evil. You must *form* and *govern* your *temper* and *manners*, according to the laws of benevolence and justice ; and qualify yourself, by all means in your power, for an *useful* and *agreeable* member of society. All this, you see, is no light business, nor can it be performed without a sincere and earnest application of the mind, as to its great and constant object. When once you consider life, and the duties of life, in this manner, you will listen eagerly to the voice of instruction and admonition, and seize every opportunity of improvement : every useful hint will be laid up in your heart ; and your chief delight will be in those persons and those books, from which you can learn true wisdom.

The only sure foundation of human virtue is religion ; and the foundation and first principle of religion is in the belief of the one only God, and a just sense of his attributes. This you will think you have learned long since, and possess in common with almost every human creature in this enlightened age and nation ; but, believe me, it is less common than you imagine, to believe in the true God—that is, to form such a notion of the Deity as is agreeable to truth, and consistent with those infinite perfections, which all profess to ascribe to him. To form worthy notions of the Supreme Being, as far as we are capable, is essential to true religion and morality ; for as it is our duty to imitate those qualities of the Divinity which are imitable by us, so is it necessary we should know what they are, and fatal to mistake them. Can those who think of God with servile dread and terror, as of a gloomy tyrant, armed with almighty power to torment and destroy them, be said to believe in the true God?—in that God who,

the Scriptures say, is love?--the kindest and best of beings, who made all creatures in bountiful goodness, that he might communicate to them some portion of his own unalterable happiness?--who condescends to style himself our Father?--and who pitieth us, as a father pitieth his own children? Can those who expect to please God by cruelty to themselves or to their fellow-creatures--by horrid punishments of their own bodies for the sin of their souls--or, by more horrid persecution of others for difference of opinion, be called true believers? Have they not set up another God in their own minds, who rather resembles the worst of beings than the best? Nor do those act on surer principles, who think to gain the favour of God by senseless enthusiasm and frantic raptures, more like the wild excesses of the most depraved human love, than that reasonable adoration, that holy reverential love, which is due to the pure and holy Father of the universe. Those likewise, who murmur against his providence, and repine under the restraint of his commands, cannot firmly believe him infinitely wise and good. If we are not disposed to trust him for future events, to banish fruitless anxiety, and to believe that all things work together for good to those that love him, surely we do not really believe in the God of mercy and truth. If we wish to avoid all remembrance of him, all communion with him, as much as we dare, surely we do not believe him to be the Source of joy and comfort, the Dispenser of all good.

How lamentable it is, that so few hearts should feel the pleasures of real piety! that prayer and thanksgiving should be performed, as they too often

arc—not with joy, and love, and gratitude ; but with cold indifference, melancholy dejection, or secret horror ! It is true, we are all such frail and sinful creatures, that we justly fear to have offended our gracious Father : but let us remember the condition of his forgiveness : If you have sinned—“sin no more.” He is ready to receive you, whenever you sincerely turn to him—and he is ready to assist you, when you do but desire to obey him. Let your devotion then be the language of filial love and gratitude ; confide to this kindest of Fathers every want and every wish of your heart ;—but submit them all to his will, and freely offer him the disposal of yourself and of all your affairs. Thank him for his benefits, and even for his punishments—convinced that these also are benefits, and mercifully designed for your good. Implore his direction in all difficulties ; his assistance in all trials ; his comfort and support in sickness or affliction ; or restraining grace in time of prosperity and joy. Do not persist in desiring what his providence denies you ; but be assured it is not good for you. Refuse not any thing he allots you, but embrace it as the best and properest for you. Can you do less to your heavenly Father than what your duty to an earthly one requires ? If you were to ask permission of your father to do, or to have any thing you desire, and he should refuse it to you ; would you obstinately persist in setting your heart upon it, notwithstanding his prohibition ? would you not rather say, My father is wiser than I am ; he loves me, and would not deny my request, if it was fit to be granted : I will therefore banish the thought, and cheerfully acquiesce in his will ?—How much rather should

this be said of our heavenly Father, whose wisdom cannot be mistaken, and whose bountiful kindness is infinite? Love him therefore in the same manner you love your earthly parents, but in a much higher degree—in the highest your nature is capable of. Forget not to dedicate yourself to his service every day; to implore his forgiveness of your faults, and his protection from evil, every night; and this not merely in formal words, unaccompanied by any act of the mind, but “in spirit and in truth;” in grateful love and humble adoration. Nor let these stated periods of worship be your only communication with him; accustom yourself to think often of him, in all your waking hours—to contemplate his wisdom and power, in the works of his hands—to acknowledge his goodness in every object of use or of pleasure—to delight in giving him praise in your inmost heart in the midst of every innocent gratification—in the liveliest hour of social enjoyment. You cannot conceive, if you have not experienced, how much such silent acts of gratitude and love will enhance every pleasure; nor what sweet serenity and cheerfulness such reflections will diffuse over your mind. On the other hand, when you are suffering pain or sorrow, when you are confined to an unpleasant situation, or engaged in a painful duty, how will it support and animate you, to refer yourself to your Almighty Father!—to be assured that he knows your state and your intentions; that no effort of virtue is lost in his sight, nor the least of your actions or sufferings disregarded or forgotten!—that his hand is ever over you to ward off every real evil, which is not the effect of your own ill conduct, and

to relieve every suffering that is not useful to your future well-being.

You see, my dear, that true devotion is not a melancholy sentiment that depresses the spirits, and excludes the ideas of pleasure, which youth is fond of : on the contrary, there is nothing so friendly to joy, so productive of true pleasure, so peculiarly suited to the warmth and innocence of a youthful heart. Do not therefore think it too soon to turn your mind to God ; but offer him the first fruits of your understanding and affections : and be assured, that the more you increase in love to him, and delight in his laws, the more you will increase in happiness, in excellence, and honour : that in proportion as you improve in true piety, you will become dear and amiable to your fellow creatures ; contented and peaceful in yourself ; and qualified to enjoy the best blessings of this life, as well as to inherit the glorious promise of immortality.

Thus far I have spoken of the first principles of all religion : namely, belief in God, worthy notions of his attributes, and suitable affections towards him,—which will naturally excite a sincere desire of obedience. But, before you can obey his will, you must know what that will is ; you must inquire in what manner he has declared it, and where you may find those laws which must be the rule of your actions.

The great laws of morality are indeed written in our hearts, and may be discovered by reason ; but our reason is of slow growth, very unequally dispensed to different persons, liable to error, and confined within very narrow limits in all. If, there-

fore, God vouchsafed to grant a particular revelation of his will—if he has been so unspeakably gracious as to send his Son into the world to reclaim mankind from error and wickedness—to die for our sins—and to teach us the way to eternal life—surely it becomes us to receive his precepts with the deepest reverence ; to love and prize them above all things ; and to study them constantly, with an earnest desire to conform our thoughts, our words, and actions to them.

As you advance in years and understanding, I hope you will be able to examine for yourself the evidences of the Christian religion, and be convinced, on rational grounds, of its divine authority. At present, such inquiries would demand more study, and greater powers of reasoning, than your age admits of. It is your part, therefore, till you are capable of understanding the proofs, to believe your parents and teachers, that the Holy Scriptures are writings inspired by God, containing a true history of facts, in which we are deeply concerned—a true recital of the laws given by God to Moses, and of the precepts of our blessed Lord and Saviour, delivered from his own mouth to his disciples, and repeated and enlarged upon in the edifying epistles of his apostles ; who were men chosen from amongst those who had the advantage of conversing with our Lord, to bear witness of his miracles and resurrection—and who, after his ascension, were assisted and inspired by the Holy Ghost. This sacred volume must be the rule of your life : in it you will find all truths necessary to be believed, and plain and easy directions for the practice of every duty. Your Bible then must be your chief study and delight : but, as it contains many various kinds of writing—some

parts obscure and difficult of interpretation, others plain and intelligible to the meanest capacity—I would chiefly recommend to your frequent perusal such parts of the sacred writings as are most adapted to your understanding, and most necessary for your instruction. Our Saviour's precepts were spoken to the common people amongst the Jews ; and were therefore given in a manner easy to be understood, and equally striking and instructive to the learned and unlearned ; for the most ignorant may comprehend them, whilst the wisest must be charmed and awed by the beautiful and majestic simplicity with which they are expressed. Of the same kind are the Ten Commandments, delivered by God to Moses ; which, as they were designed for universal laws, are worded in the most concise and simple manner, yet with a majesty which commands our utmost reverence.

I think you will receive great pleasure, as well as improvement, from the historical books of the Old Testament—provided you read them as a history, in a regular course, and keep the thread of it in your mind, as you go on. I know of none, true or fictitious, that is equally wonderful, interesting, and affecting ; or that is told in so short and simple a manner as this, which is, of all histories, the most authentic.

In my next letter, I will give you some brief directions concerning the method and course I wish you to pursue, in reading the Holy Scriptures. May you be enabled to make the best use of this most precious gift of God—this sacred treasury of knowledge ! May you read the Bible, not as a task, nor as the dull employment of that day only in which you are forbidden more lively entertainments—but

with a sincere and ardent desire of instruction ; with that love and delight in God's word which the holy Psalmist so pathetically felt and described, and which is the natural consequence of loving God and virtue ! Though I speak this of the Bible in general, I would not be understood to mean that every part of the volume is equally interesting. I have already said, that it consists of various matter, and various kinds of books, which must be read with different views and sentiments. The having some general notion of what you are to expect from each book, may possibly help you to understand them, and heighten your relish of them. I shall treat you as if you were perfectly new to the whole ; for so I wish you to consider yourself : because the time and manner in which children usually read the Bible, are very ill calculated to make them really acquainted with it ; and too many people who have read it thus, without understanding it in their youth, satisfy themselves that they know enough of it, and never afterwards study it with attention, when they come to a maturer age.

Adieu, my beloved niece ! If the feelings of your heart, whilst you read my letters, correspond with those of mine, whilst I write them, I shall not be without the advantage of your partial affection, to give weight to my advice ; for, believe me, my own dear girl, my heart and eyes overflow with tenderness while I tell you, with how warm and earnest prayers for your happiness here and hereafter, I subscribe myself

Your faithful friend,

and most affectionate aunt.

II.

ON THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

I now proceed to give my dear niece some short sketches of the matter contained in the different books of the Bible, and of the course in which they ought to be read.

The first book, *Genesis*, contains the most grand, and, to us, the most interesting events that ever happened in the universe:—The creation of the world, and of man; the deplorable fall of man, from his first state of excellence and bliss, to the distressed condition in which we see all his descendants continue: the sentence of death pronounced on Adam, and on all his race; with the reviving promise of that deliverance which has since been wrought for us by our blessed Saviour; the account of the early state of the world; of the universal deluge; the division of mankind into different nations and languages; the story of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people, whose unshaken faith and obedience, under the severest trial human nature could sustain, obtained such favour in the sight of God, that he vouchsafed to style him his friend, and promised to make of his posterity a great nation; and that in his seed—that is, in one of his descendants—all the kingdoms of the earth should be blessed: this, you will easily

see, refers to the Messiah, who was to be the blessing and deliverance of all nations. It is amazing that the Jews, possessing this prophecy, among many others, should have been so blinded by prejudice, as to have expected, from this great personage, only a temporal deliverance of their own nation from the subjection to which they were reduced under the Romans : it is equally amazing, that some Christians should, even now, confine the blessed effects of his appearance upon earth to this or that particular sect or profession, when he is so clearly and emphatically described as the Saviour of the whole world ! The story of Abraham's proceeding to sacrifice his only son at the command of God, is affecting in the highest degree, and sets forth a pattern of unlimited resignation, that every one ought to imitate in those trials of obedience under temptation, or of acquiescence under afflicting dispensations, which fall to their lot. Of this we may be assured—that our trials will always be proportioned to the powers afforded us : if we have not Abraham's strength of mind, neither shall we be called upon to lift the bloody knife against the bosom of an only child ; but if the Almighty arm should be lifted up against him, we must be ready to resign him, and all we hold dear, to the divine will. This action of Abraham has been censured by some, who do not attend to the distinction between obedience to a special command, and the detestably cruel sacrifices of the heathens, who sometimes voluntarily, and without any divine injunctions, offered up their own children, under the notion of appeasing the anger of their gods. An absolute command from God himself—as in the case of Abraham—entirely alters the moral nature of the

action ; since he, and he only, has a perfect right over the lives of his creatures, and may appoint whom he will, either angel or man, to be his instrument of destruction. That it was really the voice of God which pronounced the command, and not a delusion, might be made certain to Abraham's mind, by means we do not comprehend, but which we know to be within the power of him who made our souls as well as bodies, and who can control and direct every faculty of the human mind : and we may be assured, that if he was pleased to reveal himself so miraculously, he would not leave a possibility of doubting whether it was a real or an imaginary revelation. Thus the sacrifice of Abraham appears to be clear of all superstition, and remains the noblest instance of religious faith and submission that was ever given by a mere man : we cannot wonder that the blessings bestowed on him for it should have been extended to his posterity. This book proceeds with the history of Isaac, which becomes very interesting to us, from the touching scene I have mentioned, and still more so, if we consider him as the type of our Saviour : it recounts his marriage with Rebecca ; the birth and history of his two sons, Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, and Esau, the father of the Edomites or Idumeans ; the exquisitely affecting story of Joseph and his brethren ; and of his transplanting the Israelites into Egypt, who there multiplied to a great nation.

In *Exodus*, you read of a series of wonders, wrought by the Almighty, to rescue the oppressed Israelites from the cruel tyranny of the Egyptians, who, having first received them as guests, by de-

grees reduced them to a state of slavery. By the most peculiar mercies and exertions in their favour, God prepared his chosen people to receive, with reverent and obedient hearts, the solemn restitution of those primitive laws, which probably he had revealed to Adam and his immediate descendants, or which, at least, he made known by the dictates of conscience, but which time, and the degeneracy of mankind had much obscured. This important revelation was made to them in the wilderness of Sinai : there, assembled before the burning mountain, surrounded "with blackness, and darkness, and tempest," they heard the awful voice of God pronounce the eternal law, impressing it on their hearts with circumstances of terror, but without those encouragements, and those excellent promises, which were afterwards offered to mankind by Jesus Christ. Thus were the great laws of morality restored to the Jews, and through them transmitted to other nations ; and by that means a great restraint was opposed to the torrent of vice and impiety, which began to prevail over the world.

To those moral precepts, which are of perpetual and universal obligation, were superadded, by the ministration of Moses, many peculiar institutions, wisely adapted to different ends ; either to fix the memory of those past deliverances, which were figurative of a future and far greater salvation ; to place inviolable barriers between the Jews and the idolatrous nations by whom they were surrounded ; or, to be the civil law, by which the community was to be governed.

To conduct this series of events, and to establish these laws with his people, God raised up that great

prophet Moses, whose faith and piety enabled him to undertake and execute the most arduous enterprises, and to pursue, with unabated zeal, the welfare of his countrymen. Even in the hour of death, this generous ardour still prevailed : his last moments were employed in fervent prayers for their prosperity, and in rapturous gratitude, for the glimpse vouchsafed him of a Saviour, far greater than himself, whom God would one day raise up to his people.

Thus did Moses, by the excellency of his faith, obtain a glorious pre-eminence among the saints and prophets in heaven ; while, on earth, he will be ever revered, as the first of those benefactors to mankind, whose labours for the public good have endeared their memory to all ages.

The next book is *Leviticus*, which contains little besides the laws, for the peculiar ritual observance of the Jews, and therefore affords no great instruction to us now : you may pass it over entirely ; and, for the same reason, you may omit the first eight chapters of *Numbers*. The rest of *Numbers* is chiefly a continuation of the history, with some ritual laws.

In *Deuteronomy*, Moses makes a recapitulation of the foregoing history, with zealous exhortations to the people, faithfully to worship and obey that God, who had worked such amazing wonders for them : he promises them the noblest temporal blessings, if they prove obedient ; and adds the most awful and striking denunciations against them, if they rebel, or forsake the true God. I have before observed, that the sanctions of the Mosaic law were *temporal* rewards and punishments ; those of the

New Testament are *eternal*: these last, as they are so infinitely more forcible than the first, were reserved for the last, best gifts to mankind, and were revealed by the Messiah, in the fullest and clearest manner. Moses, in this book, directs the method in which the Israelites were to deal with the seven nations, whom they were appointed to punish for their profligacy and idolatry, and whose land they were to possess, when they had driven out the old inhabitants. He gives them excellent laws, civil as well as religious, which were ever after the standing municipal laws of that people. This book concludes with Moses's song and death.

The book of *Joshua* contains the conquests of the Israelites over the seven nations, and their establishment in the promised land. Their treatment of these conquered nations must appear to you very cruel and unjust, if you consider it as their own act, unauthorized by a positive command: but they had the most absolute injunctions, not to spare these corrupt people—"to make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy to them, but utterly to destroy them." And the reason is given—"lest they should turn away the Israelites from following the Lord, that they might serve other gods."—Deut. chap. ii. The children of Israel are to be considered as instruments in the hand of the Lord, to punish those whose idolatry and wickedness had deservedly brought destruction on them: this example, therefore, cannot be pleaded in behalf of cruelty, or bring any imputation on the character of the Jews. With regard to other cities, which did not belong to these seven nations, they were directed to deal with them according to the common law of arms at that time. If the city submitted, it became tributary, and the

people were spared ; if it resisted, the men were to be slain, but the women and children saved.—Deut. chap. xx. Yet though the crime of cruelty cannot be justly laid to their charge on this occasion, you will observe, in the course of their history, many things recorded of them very different from what you would expect from the chosen people of God, if you supposed them selected on account of their own merit. Their national character was by no means amiable ; and we are repeatedly told, that they were not chosen for their superior righteousness ; “ for they were a stiffnecked people, and provoked the Lord with their rebellions from the day they left Egypt.”—“ You have been rebellious against the Lord,” says Moses, “ from the day that I knew you.”—Deut. chap. ix. ver. 24. And he vehemently exhorts them, not to flatter themselves that their success was, in any degree, owing to their own merits : they were appointed to be the scourge of other nations, whose crimes rendered them fit objects of divine chastisement. For the sake of righteous Abraham, their founder, and perhaps for many other wise reasons, undiscovered to us, they were selected from a world overrun with idolatry, to preserve upon earth the pure worship of the one only God, and to be honoured with the birth of the Messiah amongst them. For this end, they were precluded, by divine command, from mixing with any other people ; and defended, by a great number of peculiar rites and observances, from falling into the corrupt worship practised by their neighbours.

The book of *Judges*, in which you will find the affecting stories of Samson and of Jephtha, carries on the history from the death of Joshua, about

two hundred and fifty years ; but the facts are not told in the times in which they happened, which makes some confusion ; and it will be necessary to consult the marginal dates and notes, as well as the index, in order to get any clear idea of the succession of events during that period.

The history then proceeds regularly through the two books of *Samuel*, and those of *Kings*. Nothing can be more interesting and entertaining than the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon : but, after the death of Solomon, when ten tribes revolted from his son Rehoboam, and became a separate kingdom, you will find some difficulty in understanding distinctly the histories of the two kingdoms of Israel and of Judah, which are blended together, and, by the likeness of the names, and other particulars, will be apt to confound your mind, without great attention to the different threads, thus carried on together : the index here will be of great use to you. The second book of *Kings* concludes with the Babylonish captivity, 588 years before Christ—till which time, the kingdom of Judah had descended uninterruptedly in the line of David.

The first book of *Chronicles* begins with a genealogy from Adam, through all the tribes of Israel and Judah ; and the remainder is the same history which is contained in the books of *Kings*, with little or no variation, till the separation of the ten tribes : from that period, it proceeds with the history of the kingdom of Judah alone, and gives therefore a more regular and clear account of the affairs of Judah than the book of *Kings*. You may pass over the first book of *Chronicles*, and the first nine chapters of the second book ; but, by all means,

read the remaining chapters, as they will give you more clear and distinct ideas of the history of Judah than that you read in the second book of Kings. The second of *Chronicles* ends, like the second of Kings, with the Babylonish captivity.

You must pursue the history in the book of *Ezra*, which gives an account of the return of some of the Jews, on the edict of Cyrus, and of the rebuilding the Lord's temple.

Nehemiah carries on the history for about twelve years, when he himself was governor of Jerusalem, with authority to rebuild the walls, &c.

The story of *Esther* is prior in time to that of Ezra and Nehemiah; as you will see by the marginal dates: however, as it happened during the seventy years' captivity, and is a kind of episode, it may be read in its own place.

This is the last of the canonical books that is properly historical; and I would therefore advise, that you pass over what follows, till you have continued the history through the apocryphal books.

The history of *Job* is probably very ancient, though that is a point upon which learned men have differed: it is dated, however, 1520 years before Christ. I believe it is uncertain by whom it was written: many parts of it are obscure; but it is well worth studying, for the extreme beauty of the poetry, and for the noble and sublime devotion it contains. The subject of the dispute between Job and his pretended friends, seems to be, whether the providence of God distributes the rewards and punishments of this life in exact proportion to the merit or demerit of each individual. His antagonists suppose that it does; and therefore infer, from

Job's uncommon calamities, that, notwithstanding his apparent righteousness, he was in reality a grievous sinner : they aggravate his supposed guilt by the imputation of hypocrisy, and call upon him to confess it, and to acknowledge the justice of his punishment. Job asserts his own innocence and virtue in the most pathetic manner, yet does not presume to accuse the Supreme Being of injustice. Elihu attempts to arbitrate the matter, by alleging the impossibility that so frail and ignorant a creature as man should comprehend the ways of the Almighty ; and, therefore, condemns the unjust and cruel inference the three friends had drawn from the sufferings of Job. He also blames Job for the presumption of acquitting himself of all iniquity ; since the best of men are not pure in the sight of God, but all have something to repent of ; and he advises him to make this use of his afflictions. At last, by a bold figure of poetry, the Supreme Being himself is introduced, speaking from the whirlwind, and silencing them all by the most sublime display of his own power, magnificence, and wisdom, and of the comparative littleness and ignorance of man. This indeed is the only conclusion of the argument which could be drawn, at a time when life and immortality were not yet brought to light. A future retribution is the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty arising from the sufferings of good people in this life.

Next follow *the Psalms*, with which you cannot be too conversant. If you have any taste, either for poetry or devotion, they will be your delight, and will afford you a continual feast. The Bible translation is far better than that used in the Com-

mon Prayer Book ; and will often give you the sense, when the other is obscure. In this, as well as in all other parts of the Scripture, you must be careful always to consult the margin, which gives you the corrections made since the last translation, and is generally preferable to the words of the text. I would wish you to select some of the Psalms that please you best, and get them by heart ; or, at least, make yourself mistress of the sentiments contained in them : Mr. Delany's Life of David will show you the occasions on which several of them were composed, which add much to their beauty and propriety ; and, by comparing them with the events of David's life, you will greatly enhance your pleasure in them. Never did the spirit of true piety breathe more strongly than in these divine songs ; which, being added to a rich vein of poetry, makes them more captivating to my heart and imagination than any thing I ever read. You will consider how great disadvantages any poems must sustain from being rendered literally into prose, and then imagine how beautiful these must be in the original. May you be enabled, by reading them frequently, to transfuse into your own breast that holy flame which inspired the writer !—to delight in the Lord, and in his laws, like the Psalmist—to rejoice in him always—and to think “ one day in his courts better than a thousand !” But, may you escape the heart-piercing sorrow of such a repentance as that of David, by avoiding sin, which humbled this unhappy king to the dust, and which cost him such bitter anguish, as it is impossible to read of without being moved. Not all the pleasures of the most prosperous sinner could counterbalance the hun-

dredth part of those sensations described in his penitential Psalms—and which must be the portion of every man, who has fallen from a religious state into such crimes, when once he recovers a sense of religion and virtue, and is brought to a real hatred of sin : however available such repentance may be to the safety and happiness of the soul after death, it is a state of such exquisite suffering here, that one cannot be enough surprised at the folly of those who indulge in sin, with the hope of living to make their peace with God by repentance. Happy are they who preserve their innocence unsullied by any great or wilful crimes, and who have only the common failings of humanity to repent of ! these are sufficiently mortifying to a heart deeply smitten with the love of virtue, and with the desire of perfection. There are many very striking prophecies of the Messiah in these divine songs, particularly in Psalm xxii : such may be found scattered up and down almost throughout the Old Testament. To bear testimony to *him* is the great and ultimate end for which the spirit of prophecy was bestowed on the sacred writers : but this will appear more plainly to you, when you enter on the study of prophecy, which you are now much too young to undertake.

The *Proverbs*, and *Ecclesiastes*, are rich stores of wisdom, from which I wish you to adopt such maxims, as may be of infinite use, both to your temporal and eternal interest. But detached sentences are a kind of reading not proper to be continued long at a time ; a few of them, well chosen and digested, will do you much more service than to read half a dozen chapters together : in this respect they are directly opposite to the historical books, which,

if not read in continuation, can hardly be understood, or retained to any purpose.

The *Song of Solomon* is a fine poem—but its mystical reference to religion lies too deep for a common understanding: if you read it, therefore, it will be rather as a matter of curiosity than of edification.

Next follow the *Prophecies*, which, though highly deserving the greatest attention and study, I think you had better omit for some years, and then read them with a good exposition; as they are much too difficult for you to understand, without assistance. Dr. Newton on the Prophecies will help you much, whenever you undertake this study—which you should by all means do, when your understanding is ripe enough; because one of the main proofs of our religion rests on the testimony of the prophecies; and they are very frequently quoted, and referred to, in the New Testament: besides, the sublimity of the language and sentiments, through all the disadvantages of antiquity and translation, must, in very many passages, strike every person of taste; and the excellent moral and religious precepts found in them must be useful to all.

Though I have spoken of these books, in the order in which they stand, I repeat, that they are not to be read in that order—but that the thread of the history is to be pursued, from Nehemiah, to the first book of *Maccabees*, in the Apocrypha; taking care to observe the chronology regularly, by referring to the index, which supplies the deficiencies of this history, from *Josephus's Antiquities of the Jews*. The first of Maccabees carries on the story, till within 195 years of our Lord's circum-

cision : the second book is the same narrative, written by a different hand, and does not bring the history so forward as the first ; so that it may be entirely omitted, unless you have the curiosity to read some particulars of the heroic constancy of the Jews, under the tortures inflicted by their heathen conquerors ; with a few other things, not mentioned in the first book.

You must then connect the history by the help of the index, which will give you brief heads of the changes that happened in the state of the Jews, from this time till the birth of the Messiah.

The other books of the Apocrypha, though not admitted as of sacred authority, have many things well worth your attention ; particularly the admirable book called *Ecclesiasticus*, and the *Book of Wisdom*. But, in the course of reading which I advise, these must be omitted till after you have gone through the Gospels and Acts, that you may not lose the historical thread.—I must reserve, however, what I have to say to you concerning the New Testament, to another letter.

Adieu, my dear !

III.

ON THE SAME.

MY DEAREST NIECE,

WE come now to that part of Scripture, which is the most important of all ; and which you must make your constant study, not only till you are thoroughly acquainted with it, but all your life long ; because, how often soever repeated, it is impossible to read the life and death of our blessed Saviour, without renewing and increasing in our hearts that love, and reverence, and gratitude towards him, which is so justly due for all he did and suffered for us ! Every word that fell from his lips is more precious than all the treasures of the earth ; for his “ are the words of eternal life ! ” They must, therefore, be laid up in your heart, and constantly referred to, on all occasions, as the rule and direction of all your actions : particularly those very comprehensive moral precepts he has graciously left with us, which can never fail to direct us aright, if fairly and honestly applied : such as “ whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them.” There is no occasion, great or small, on which you may not safely apply this rule, for the direction of your conduct : and, whilst your heart honestly adheres to it, you can never be guilty of any sort of injustice or unkindness. The two great commandments,

which contain the summary of our duty to God and man, are no less easily retained, and made a standard by which to judge our own hearts—"to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our strength; and our neighbour (or fellow-creature) as ourselves." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour;" therefore, if you have true benevolence, you will never do any thing injurious to individuals, or to society. Now, all crimes whatever are (in their remoter consequences at least, if not immediately, and apparently) injurious to the society in which we live. It is impossible *to love God*, without desiring to please him, and, as far as we are able, to resemble him; therefore, the love of God must lead to every virtue, in the highest degree; and we may be sure we do not truly love him, if we content ourselves with avoiding flagrant sins, and do not strive in good earnest to reach the greatest degree of perfection we are capable of. Thus do those few words direct us to the highest Christian virtue. Indeed, the whole tenor of the Gospel is to offer us every help, direction, and motive, that can enable us to attain that degree of perfection, on which depends our eternal good.

What an example is set before us in our blessed Master! How is his whole life, from earliest youth, dedicated to the pursuit of true wisdom, and to the practice of the most exalted virtue! When you see him, at *twelve years of age*, in the temple amongst the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions on the subject of religion, and astonishing them all with his understanding and answers—you will say, perhaps,—“Well might the Son of God, even at those years, be far wiser

than the aged ; but can a mortal child emulate such heavenly wisdom ? Can such a pattern be proposed to *my* imitation ?"—Yes, my dear ;—remember that he has bequeathed to you his heavenly wisdom, as far as concerns your own good. He has left you such declarations of his will, and of the consequences of your actions, as you are, even now, fully able to understand, if you will but attend to them. If then you will imitate his zeal for knowledge, if you will delight in gaining information and improvement ; you may even now become " wise unto salvation." Unmoved by the praise he acquired amongst these learned men, you see him meekly return to the subjection of a child, under those who appeared to be his parents, though he was in reality their Lord : you see him return to live with them, to work for them, and to be the joy and solace of their lives ; till the time came, when he was to enter on that scene of public action, for which his heavenly Father had sent him from his own right hand, to take upon him the form of a poor carpenter's son. What a lesson of humility is this, and of obedience to parents ! When, having received the glorious testimony from Heaven, of his being the beloved Son of the Most High, he enters on his public ministry, what an example does he give us of the most extensive and constant benevolence !—how are all his hours spent in doing good to the souls and bodies of men !—not the meanest sinner is below his notice :—to reclaim and to save them, he condescends to converse familiarly with the most corrupt, as well as the most abject. All his miracles are wrought to benefit mankind ; not one to punish and afflict them. Instead of using the almighty power, which

accompanied him, to the purpose of exalting himself and treading down his enemies, he makes no other use of it than to heal and to save.

When you come to read of his sufferings and death, the ignominy and reproach, the sorrow of mind and torment of body, which he submitted to—when you consider, that it was for all your sakes—“that by his stripes we are healed,” and by his death we are raised from destruction to everlasting life—what can I say that can add any thing to the sensations you must then feel? No power of language can make the scene more touching than it appears in the plain and simple narrations of the evangelists. The heart that is unmoved by it can be scarcely human: but, my dear, the emotions of tenderness and compunction, which almost every one feels in reading this account, will be of no avail, unless applied to the true end; unless it inspires you with a sincere and warm affection towards your blessed Lord; with a firm resolution to obey his commands; to be his faithful disciple; and ever to renounce and abhor those sins, which brought mankind under divine condemnation, and from which we have been redeemed at so dear a rate. Remember that the title of Christian, or follower of Christ, implies a more than ordinary degree of holiness and goodness. As our motives to virtue are stronger than those which are afforded the rest of mankind, our guilt will be proportionably great if we depart from it.

Our Saviour appears to have had three great purposes, in descending from his glory, and dwelling amongst men: the first to teach them true virtue, both by his example and precepts; the second, to

give them the most forcible motives to the practice of it, “by bringing life and immortality to light,” by showing them the certainty of a resurrection and judgment, and the absolute necessity of obedience to God’s laws; the third, to sacrifice himself for us, to obtain by his death the remission of our sins upon our repentance and reformation, and the power of bestowing on his sincere followers the inestimable gift of immortal happiness.

What a tremendous scene of the last day does the Gospel place before our eyes! of that day when you, and every one of us, shall awake from the grave, and behold the Son of God, on his glorious tribunal, attended by millions of celestial beings, of whose superior excellence we can now form no adequate idea! When, in presence of all mankind, of those holy angels, and of the great Judge himself, you must give an account of your past life, and hear your final doom, from which there can be no appeal, and which must determine your fate to all eternity—then think (if for a moment you can bear the thought) what will be the desolation, shame, and anguish of those wretched souls, who shall hear these dreadful words, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” O, my beloved child! I cannot support even the idea of your becoming one of those undone, lost creatures. I trust, in God’s mercy, that you will make a better use of that knowledge of his will, which he has vouchsafed you, and of those amiable dispositions he has given you. Let us, therefore, turn from this horrid, this insupportable view, and rather endeavour to imagine, as far as is possible, what will be the sensation

of your soul, if you shall hear our heavenly Judge address you in these transporting words, "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Think, what it must be to become an object of the esteem and applause, not only of all mankind assembled together, but of all the host of heaven, of our blessed Lord himself, nay, of his and our Almighty Father! to find your frail flesh changed in a moment into a glorious celestial body, endowed with perfect beauty, health, and agility; to find your soul cleansed from all its faults and infirmities; exalted to the purest and noblest affections—overflowing with divine love and rapturous gratitude; to have your understanding enlightened and refined, your heart enlarged and purified, and every power and disposition of mind and body adapted to the highest relish of virtue and happiness! Thus accomplished, to be admitted into the society of amiable and happy beings, all united in the most perfect peace and friendship, all breathing nothing but love to God, and to each other; with them to dwell in scenes more delightful than the richest imagination can paint; free from every pain and care, and from all possibility of change and satiety: but, above all, to enjoy the more immediate presence of God himself; to be able to comprehend and admire his adorable perfections in a high degree, though still far short of their infinity; to be conscious of his love and favour, and to rejoice in the light of his countenance! But here all imagination fails: we can form no idea of that bliss which may be communicated to us by such a near approach to the Source of all beauty and all good. We must

content ourselves with believing that it is "what mortal eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." The crown of all our joys will be to know that we are secure of possessing them for ever. What a transporting idea!

My dearest child! can you reflect on all these things, and not feel the most earnest longings after immortality? Do not all other views and desires seem mean and trifling, when compared with this? And does not your inmost heart resolve that this shall be the chief and constant object of its wishes and pursuit, through the whole course of your life? If you are not insensible to that desire of happiness, which seems woven into our nature, you cannot surely be unmoved by the prospect of such a transcendent degree of it; and that, continued to all eternity—perhaps continually increasing. You cannot but dread the forfeiture of such an inheritance as the most insupportable evil! Remember then—remember the conditions on which alone it can be obtained. God will not give to vice, to carelessness, or sloth, the prize he has proposed to virtue. You have every help that can animate your endeavours: you have written laws to direct you; the example of Christ and his disciples to encourage you; the most awakening motives to engage you; and you have, besides, the comfortable promise of constant assistance from the Holy Spirit, if you diligently and sincerely pray for it. O, my dear child! let not all this mercy be lost upon you; but give your attention to this your only important concern, and accept, with profound gratitude, the inestimable advantages that are thus affectionately offered you.

Though the four Gospels are each of them a narration of the life, sayings, and death of Christ ; yet, as they are not exactly alike, but some circumstances and sayings, omitted in one, are recorded in another, you must make yourself perfectly mistress of them all.

The Acts of the Holy Apostles, endowed with the Holy Ghost, and authorized by their divine Master, come next in order to be read. Nothing can be more interesting and edifying than the history of their actions ; of the piety, zeal, and courage, with which they preached the glad tidings of salvation ; and of the various exertions of the wonderful powers conferred on them by the Holy Spirit, for the confirmation of their mission.

The character of St. Paul, and his miraculous conversion, demand your particular attention : most of the apostles were men of low birth and education, but St. Paul was a Roman citizen ; that is, he possessed the privileges annexed to the freedom of the city of Rome, which was considered as a high distinction in those countries that had been conquered by the Romans : he was educated amongst the most learned sect of the Jews, and by one of their principal doctors. He was a man of extraordinary eloquence, as appears, not only in his writings, but in several speeches in his own defence, pronounced before governors and courts of justice, when he was called to account for the doctrines he taught. He seems to have been of an uncommonly warm temper, and zealous in whatever religion he professed : this zeal, before his conversion, showed itself in the most unjustifiable actions, by furiously persecuting the innocent Christians : but, though his actions

were bad, we may be sure his intentions were good ; otherwise we should not have seen a miracle employed to convince him of his mistake, and to bring him into the right way. This example may assure us of the mercy of God towards mistaken consciences, and ought to inspire us with the most enlarged charity and good-will towards those whose erroneous principles mislead their conduct : instead of resentment and hatred against their persons, we ought only to feel an active wish of assisting them to find the truth ; since we know not whether, if convinced, they might not prove, like St. Paul, chosen vessels to promote the honour of God, and of true religion. It is not my intention now to enter with you into any of the arguments for the truth of Christianity, otherwise it would be impossible wholly to pass over that which arises from this remarkable conversion, and which has been so admirably illustrated by a noble writer (lord Lyttelton), whose tract on this subject is in every body's hand.

Next follow the Epistles, which make a very important part of the New Testament ; and you cannot be too much employed in reading them. They contain the most excellent precepts and admonitions ; and are of particular use in explaining more at large several doctrines of Christianity, which we could not so fully comprehend without them. There are indeed, in the Epistles of St. Paul, many passages hard to be understood ; such, in particular, are the first eleven chapters to the Romans, the greater part of his Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, and several chapters of that to the Hebrews. Instead of perplexing yourself with these

more obscure passages of Scripture, I would wish you to employ your attention chiefly on those that are plain; and to judge of the doctrines taught in the other parts, by comparing them with what you find in these. It is through the neglect of this rule, that many have been led to draw the most absurd doctrines from the Holy Scriptures. Let me particularly recommend to your careful perusal the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. In the 14th chapter, St. Paul has in view the difference between the Jewish and Gentile (or heathen) converts at that time; the former were disposed to look with horror on the latter, for their impiety in not paying the same regard to the distinctions of days and meats, that they did; and the latter, on the contrary, were inclined to look with contempt on the former, for their weakness and superstition. Excellent is the advice which the apostle gives to both parties: he exhorts the Jewish converts not to judge, and the Gentiles not to despise; remembering that the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Endeavour to conform yourself to this advice; to acquire a temper of universal candour and benevolence; and learn neither to despise nor condemn any persons on account of their particular modes of faith and worship—remembering always, that goodness is confined to no party; that there are wise and worthy men among all the sects of Christians; and that to his own master every one must stand or fall.

I will enter no farther into the several points discussed by St. Paul in his various epistles; most of them too intricate for your understanding at pre-

sent, and many of them beyond my abilities to state clearly. I will only again recommend to you, to read those passages frequently, which, with so much fervour and energy, excite you to the practice of the most exalted piety and benevolence. If the effusions of a heart warmed with the tenderest affection for the whole human race; if precept, warning, encouragement, example, urged by an eloquence which such affection only could inspire—are capable of influencing your mind, you cannot fail to find, in such parts of his epistles as are adapted to your understanding, the strongest persuasives to every virtue than can adorn and improve your nature.

The Epistle of St. James is entirely practical, and exceedingly fine; you cannot study it too much. It seems particularly designed to guard Christians against misunderstanding some things in St. Paul's writings which have been fatally perverted to the encouragement of a dependence on faith alone, without good works. But the more rational commentators will tell you, that by the works of the law, which the apostle asserts to be incapable of justifying us, he means, not the works of moral righteousness, but the ceremonial works of the Mosaic law—on which the Jews laid the greatest stress, as necessary to salvation. But St. James tells us, that “if any man among us seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain:” and that “pure religion, and undefiled before God the Father, is this—to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Faith in Christ, if it

produce not these effects, he declares is dead, or of no power.

The Epistles of St. Peter are also full of the best instructions and admonitions, concerning the relative duties of life ; amongst which are set forth the duties of women in general, and of wives in particular. Some part of the second Epistle is prophetical : warning the church of false teachers, and false doctrines, which would undermine morality, and disgrace the cause of Christianity.

The first of St. John is written in a highly figurative style, which makes it in some parts hard to be understood : but the spirit of divine love, which it so fervently expresses, renders it highly edifying and delightful. That love of God and of man which this beloved apostle so pathetically recommends, is in truth the essence of religion, as our Saviour himself informs us.

The book of Revelation contains a prophetical account of most of the great events relating to the Christian church, which were to happen from the time of the writer, St. John, to the end of the world. Many learned men have taken a great deal of pains to explain it ; and they have done this in many instances very successfully : but, I think, it is yet too soon for you to study this part of Scripture ; some years hence perhaps there may be no objections to your attempting it, and taking into your hands the best expositions to assist you in reading such of the most difficult parts of the New Testament as you cannot now be supposed to understand. May Heaven direct you in studying this sacred volume, and render it the means of making you wise unto salvation ! May you love and reve-

rence, as it deserves, this blessed and invaluable book, which contains the best rule of life, the clearest declaration of the will and laws of the Deity, the reviving assurance of favour of true penitents, and the unspeakably joyful tidings of eternal life and happiness to all the truly virtuous, through Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Deliverer of the world.

Adieu.

IV.

ON THE REGULATION OF THE HEART AND AFFECTIONS.

You will have read the New Testament to very little purpose, my dearest niece, if you do not perceive the great end and intention of all its precepts to be the improvement and the regulation of the heart : not the outward actions alone, but the inward affections which give birth to them, are the subjects of those precepts ; as appears in our Saviour's explanation (Matt. v.) of the commandments delivered to Moses ; and in a thousand other passages of the Gospels, which it is needless to recite. There are no virtues more insisted on, as necessary to our future happiness, than humility, and sincerity, or uprightness of heart ; yet none more difficult and rare. Pride and vanity, the vices opposite to humility, are the sources of almost all the worst faults, both of men and women. The latter are particularly accused (and not without reason) of vanity, the vice of little minds, chiefly conversant with trifling subjects. Pride and vanity have been supposed to differ so essentially, as hardly ever to be found in the same person. " Too proud to be vain," is no uncommon expression ; by which, I suppose, is meant, too proud to be over anxious for the admiration of others ; but this seems to be

founded on mistake. Pride is, I think, a high opinion of one's self, and an affected contempt of others : I say *affected* ; for that it is not a *real* contempt is evident from this, that the lowest object of it is important enough to torture the proud man's heart, only by refusing him the homage and admiration he requires. Thus Haman could relish none of the advantages in which he valued himself, whilst that Mordecai, whom he pretended to despise, sat still in the king's gate, and would not bow to him as he passed. But, as the proud man's contempt of others is only assumed with a view to awe them into reverence, by his pretended superiority, so it does not preclude an extreme inward anxiety about their opinions, and a slavish dependence on them for all his gratifications. Pride, though a distinct passion, is seldom unaccompanied by vanity, which is an extravagant desire of admiration. Indeed, I never saw an insolent person, in whom a discerning eye might not discover a very large share of vanity, and of envy, its usual companion. One may nevertheless see many *vain* persons who are not *proud* ; though they desire to be admired, they do not always admire themselves : but as timid minds are apt to despair of those things they earnestly wish for, so you will often see the woman who is most anxious to be thought handsome, most inclined to be dissatisfied with her looks, and to think all the assistance of art too little to attain the end desired. To this cause, I believe, we may generally attribute affectation ; which seems to imply a mean opinion of one's own real form, or character, while we strive against nature to alter ourselves by ridiculous contortions of body, or by feigned senti-

ments and unnatural manners. There is no art so mean, which this mean passion will not descend to for its gratification—no creature so insignificant, whose incense it will not gladly receive. Far from despising others, the vain man will court them with the most assiduous adulation; in hopes, by feeding their vanity, to induce them to supply the craving wants of his own. He will put on the guise of benevolence, tenderness, and friendship, where he feels not the least degree of kindness, in order to prevail on good nature and gratitude to like and to commend him: but if, in any particular case, he fancies the airs of insolence and contempt may succeed better, he makes no scruple to assume them; though so awkwardly, that he still appears to depend on the breath of the person he would be thought to despise. Weak and timid natures seldom venture to try this last method; and, when they do, it is without the assurance necessary to carry it on with success: but a bold and confident mind will oftener endeavour to command and extort admiration than to court it. As women are more fearful than men, perhaps this may be one reason why they are more vain than proud; whilst the other sex are oftener proud than vain. It is, I suppose, from some opinion of a certain greatness of mind accompanying the one vice rather than the other, that many will readily confess their pride, nay, and even be proud of their pride, whilst every creature is ashamed of being convicted of vanity. You see, however, that the end of both is the same, though pursued by different means: or, if it differs, it is in the importance of the subject. Whilst men

are proud of power, of wealth, dignity, learning, or abilities, young women are usually ambitious of nothing more than to be admired for their persons, their dress, or their most trivial accomplishments. The homage of men is their grand object ; but they only desire them to be in love with their persons, careless how despicable their minds appear, even to these their pretended adorers. I have known a woman so vain as to boast of their most disgraceful addresses ; being contented to be thought meanly of, in points the most interesting to her honour, for the sake of having it known that her person was attractive enough to make a man transgress the bounds of respect due to her character, which was not a vicious one, if you except this intemperate vanity. But this passion too often leads to the most ruinous actions, always corrupts the heart, and, when indulged, renders it, perhaps, as displeasing in the sight of the Almighty, as those faults which find least mercy from the world : yet, alas ! it is a passion so prevailing, I had almost said universal, in our sex, that it requires all the efforts of reason, and all the assistance of grace, totally to subdue it. Religion is indeed the only effectual remedy for this evil. If our hearts are not dedicated to God, they will, in some way or other, be dedicated to the world, both in youth and age. If our actions are not constantly referred to him, if his approbation and favour is not our principal object—we shall certainly take up with the applause of men, and make that the ruling motive of our conduct. How melancholy is it to see this phantom so eagerly followed through life !—whilst all that is

truly valuable to us is looked upon with indifference, or, at best, made subordinate to this darling pursuit !

Equally vain and absurd is every scheme of life that is not subservient to, and does not terminate in, that great end of our being—the attainment of real excellence, and of the favour of God. Whenever this becomes sincerely our object, then will pride and vanity, envy, ambition, covetousness, and every evil passion, lose their power over us ; and we shall, in the language of Scripture, “ walk humbly with our God.” We shall then cease to repine under our natural or accidental disadvantages, and feel dissatisfied only with our moral defects ; we shall love and respect all our fellow-creatures, as the children of the same dear Parent, and particularly those who seek to do his will : “ all our delight will be in the saints that are in the earth, and in such as excel in virtue.” We shall wish to cultivate good-will, and to promote innocent enjoyment, wherever we are : we shall strive to please, not from vanity, but from benevolence. Instead of contemplating our own fancied perfections, or even real superiority, with self-complacence, religion will teach us to “ look into ourselves, and fear :” the best of us, God knows, have enough to fear, if we honestly search into all the dark recesses of the heart, and bring out every thought and intention fairly to the light, to be tried by the precepts of our pure and holy religion.

It is with the rules of the Gospel we must compare ourselves, and not with the world around us ; for we know, “ that the many are wicked ; and that we must not be conformed to the world.”

How necessary it is, frequently thus to enter into ourselves, and search out our spirit, will appear, if we consider, how much the human heart is prone to insincerity, and how often, from being first led by vanity into attempts to impose upon others, we come at last to impose on ourselves.

There is nothing more common than to see people fall into the most ridiculous mistakes, with regard to their own characters ; but I can by no means allow such mistakes to be unavoidable, and therefore innocent : they arose from voluntary insincerity, and are continued for want of that strict honesty towards ourselves and others, which the Scripture calls “ *singleness of heart* ;” and which in modern language is termed *simplicity*—the most enchanting of all qualities, esteemed and beloved in proportion to its rareness.

He, who “ requires truth in the inward parts,” will not excuse our self-deception ; for he has commanded us to examine ourselves diligently, and has given us such rules as can never mislead us, if we desire the truth, and are willing to see our faults, in order to correct them. But this is the point in which we are defective ; we are desirous to gain our own approbation, as well as that of others, at a cheaper rate than that of being really what we ought to be ; and we take pains to persuade ourselves that we are that which we indolently admire and approve.

There is nothing in which this self-deception is more notorious than in what regards sentiment and feeling. Let a vain young woman be told that tenderness and softness is the peculiar charm of the sex—that even their weakness is lovely, and their

fears becoming—and you will presently observe her grow so tender, as to be ready to weep for a fly ; so fearful, that she starts at a feather ; and so weak-hearted, that the smallest accident quite overpowers her. Her fondness and affection become fulsome and ridiculous ; her compassion grows contemptible weakness ; and her apprehensiveness the most abject cowardice : for, when once she quits the direction of nature, she knows not where to stop, and continually exposes herself by the most absurd extremes.

Nothing so effectually defeats its own ends as this kind of affectation : for though warm affections and tender feelings are beyond measure amiable and charming, when perfectly natural, and kept under the due control of reason and principle, yet nothing is so truly disgusting as the affectation of them, or even the unbridled indulgence of such as are real.

Remember, my dear, that our feelings were not given us for our ornament, but to spur us on to right actions. Compassion, for instance, was not impressed upon the human heart only to adorn the fair face with tears, and to give an agreeable languor to the eyes ; it was designed to excite our utmost endeavours to relieve the sufferer. Yet, how often have I heard that selfish weakness, which flies from the sight of distress, dignified with the name of tenderness ! “ My friend is, I hear, in the deepest affliction and misery—I have not seen her—for indeed I cannot bear such scenes—they affect me too much !—those who have less sensibility are fitter for this world ; but, for my part, I own, I am not able to support such things—I shall not

attempt to visit her, till I hear she has recovered her spirits." This have I heard said with an air of complacence; and the poor selfish creature has persuaded herself that she had finer feelings than those generous friends, who are sitting patiently in the house of mourning, watching in silence the proper moment to pour in the balm of comfort; who suppressed their own sensations, and only attended to those of the afflicted; and whose tears flowed in secret, whilst their eyes and voice were taught to enliven the sinking heart with the appearance of cheerfulness.

That sort of tenderness, which makes us useless, may indeed be pitied and excused, if owing to natural imbecillity; but if it pretends to loveliness and excellence, it becomes truly contemptible.

The same degree of active courage is not to be expected in woman as in man; and, not belonging to her nature, it is not agreeable in her: but passive courage, patience, and fortitude under sufferings—presence of mind, and calm resignation in danger—are surely desirable in every rational creature; especially in one professing to believe in an overruling Providence, in which we may at all times quietly confide, and which we may safely trust with every event that does not depend upon our own will. Whenever you find yourself deficient in these virtues, let it be a subject of shame and humiliation, not of vanity and self-complacence: do not fancy yourself the more amiable for that which really makes you despicable, but content yourself with the faults and weaknesses that belong to you, without putting on more by way of ornament. With regard to tenderness, remember, that passion is best

shown by an ardour to relieve, and affection by assiduity to promote the good and happiness of the persons you love : that tears are unamiable, instead of being ornamental, when voluntarily indulged ; and can never be attractive, but when they flow irresistibly, and avoid observation as much as possible : the same may be said of every other mark of passion. It attracts our sympathy, if involuntary, and not designed for our notice ; it offends, if we see that it is purposely indulged and obtruded on our observation.

Another point, on which the heart is apt to deceive itself, is generosity. We cannot bear to suspect ourselves of base and ungenerous feelings ; therefore we let them work without attending to them, or we endeavour to find out some better motive for those actions, which really flow from envy and malignity. Before you flatter yourself that you are a generous benevolent person, take care to examine whether you are really glad of every advantage and excellence which your friends and companions possess, though they are such as you are yourself deficient in. If your sister or friend makes a greater proficiency than yourself, in any accomplishment which you are in pursuit of, do you never wish to stop her progress, instead of trying to hasten your own ?

The boundaries between virtuous emulation and vicious envy are very nice, and may be easily mistaken. The first will awaken your attention to your own defects, and excite your endeavours to improve ; the last will make you repine at the improvement of others, and wish to rob them of the praise they

have deserved. Do you sincerely rejoice when your sister is enjoying pleasure or commendation, though you are at the same time in disagreeable or mortifying circumstances?—Do you delight to see her approved and beloved, even by those who do not pay you equal attention?—Are you afflicted and humbled, when she is found to be in fault, though you yourself are remarkably clear from the same offence? If your heart assures you of the affirmative to these questions, then may you think yourself a kind sister, and a generous friend : for you must observe, my dear, that scarcely any creature is so depraved, as not to be capable of kind affections in some circumstances. We are all naturally benevolent, when no selfish interest interferes, and where no advantage is to be given up : we can all pity distress, when it lies complaining at our feet, and confesses our superiority and happier situation ; but I have seen the sufferer himself become the object of envy and ill-will, as soon as his fortitude and greatness of mind had begun to attract admiration, and to make the envious person feel the superiority of virtue above good fortune.

To take sincere pleasure in the blessings and excellences of others, is a much surer mark of benevolence than to pity their calamities : and you must always acknowledge yourself ungenerous and selfish, whenever you are less ready to “rejoice with them that do rejoice,” than to “weep with them that weep.” If ever your commendations of others are forced from you, by the fear of betraying your envy ; or if ever you feel a secret desire to mention something that may abate the admiration given them,

do not try to conceal the base disposition from yourself, since that is not the way to cure it.

Human nature is ever liable to corruption, and has in it the seeds of every vice, as well as of every virtue; and the first will be continually shooting forth and growing up, if not carefully watched and rooted out as fast as they appear. It is the business of religion to purify and exalt us, from a state of imperfection and infirmity, to that which is necessary and essential to happiness. Envy would make us miserable in heaven itself, could it be admitted there; for we must there see beings far more excellent, and consequently more happy than ourselves; and till we can rejoice in seeing virtue rewarded in proportion to its degree, we can never hope to be among the number of the blessed.

Watch then, my dear child, and observe every evil propensity of your heart, that you may in time correct it, with the assistance of that grace which alone can conquer the evils of our nature, and which you must constantly and earnestly implore.

I must add, that even those vices which you would most blush to own, and which most effectually defile and vilify the female heart, may by degrees be introduced into yours, to the ruin of that virtue, without which, misery and shame must be your portion—unless the avenues of the heart are guarded by a sincere abhorrence of every thing that approaches towards evil. Would you be of the number of those blessed, “who are pure in heart,”—you must hate and avoid every thing, both in books and in conversation, that conveys impure ideas, however neatly clothed in decent language, or recommended to your taste by pretended refinements

and tender sentiments; by elegance of style, or force of wit and genius.

I must now begin to give you my thoughts on the regulation of the affections. As that is a subject of too much consequence to be soon dismissed, I shall dedicate to it my next letter : in the mean time, believe me

Your ever affectionate.

V.

ON THE REGULATION OF THE AFFECTIONS.

THE attachments of the heart, on which almost all the happiness or misery of life depends, are most interesting objects of our consideration. I shall give my dear niece the observations which experience has enabled me to draw from real life, and not from what others have said or written, however great their authority.

The first attachment of young hearts is *friendship*—the noblest and happiest of affections when real, and built on a solid foundation ; but oftener pernicious than useful to very young people, because the connexion itself is ill understood, and the subject of it frequently ill chosen. Their first error is that of supposing equality of age, and exact similarity of disposition, indispensably requisite in friends ; whereas, these are circumstances which in great measure disqualify them for assisting each other in moral improvements, or supplying each other's defects ; they expose them to the same dangers, and incline them to encourage rather than correct each other's failings.

The grand cement of this kind of friendship is telling secrets, which they call confidence : and I verily believe, that the desire of having secrets to tell, has often helped to draw silly girls into very

unhappy adventures. If they have no lover or amour to talk of, the too frequent subject of their confidence is, betraying the secrets of their families, or conjuring up fancied hardships to complain of against their parents or relations : this odious cabal they call friendship ; and fancy themselves dignified by the profession : but nothing is more different from the reality, as is seen by observing how generally those early friendships drop off, as the parties advance in years and understanding.

Do not you, my dear, be too ready to profess a friendship with any of your young companions. Love them, and be always ready to serve and oblige them, and to promote all their innocent gratifications ; but be very careful how you enter into confidence with girls of your own age. Rather choose some person of riper years and judgment, whose good-nature and worthy principles may assure you of her readiness to do you a service, and of her candour and condescension towards you.

I do not expect that youth should delight to associate with age, or should lay open its feelings and inclinations to such as have almost forgot what they were, or how to make proper allowance for them ; but if you are fortunate enough to meet with a young woman eight or ten years older than yourself, of good sense and good principles, to whom you can make yourself agreeable, it may be one of the happiest circumstances of your life. She will be able to advise and to improve you—and your desire of this assistance will recommend you to her taste, at much as her superior abilities will recommend her to you. Such a connexion will afford you more pleasure, as well as more profit, than you can

expect from a girl like yourself, equally unprovided with knowledge, prudence, or any of those qualifications which are necessary to make society delightful.

With a friend, such as I have described, of twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, you can hardly pass an hour without finding yourself brought forward in some useful knowledge; without learning something of the world, or of your own nature; some rule of behaviour, or some necessary caution in the conduct of life: for even in the gayest conversations, such useful hints may often be gathered from those whose knowledge and experience are much beyond our own. Whenever you find yourself in real want of advice, or seek the relief of unburdening your heart, such a friend will be able to judge of the feelings you describe, or of the circumstances you are in—perhaps from her own experience—or, at least, from the knowledge she will have gained of human nature! she will be able to point out your dangers, and to guide you into the right path; or, if she finds herself incapable, she will have the prudence to direct you to some abler adviser. The age I have mentioned will not prevent her joining in your pleasures, nor will it make her a dull or grave companion; on the contrary, she will have more materials for entertaining conversation, and her liveliness will show itself more agreeably than in one of your own age. Yours therefore will be the advantage in such a connexion; yet do not despair of being admitted into it, if you have an amiable and docile disposition. Ingenuous youth has many charms for a benevolent mind; and, as nothing is more endearing than the exercise of bene-

volence, the hope of being useful and beneficial to you will make her fond of your company.

I have known some of the sweetest and most delightful connexions between persons of different ages, in which the elder has received the highest gratification from the affection and docility of the younger; whilst the latter has gained the noblest advantages from the conversation and counsels of her wiser friend. Nor has the attachment been without use as well as pleasure to the elder party. She has found that there is no better way of improving one's own attainments than by imparting them to another; and the desire of doing this in the most acceptable way, has added a sweetness and gentleness to her manner, and taught her the arts of insinuating instruction, and of winning the heart, whilst she convinces the understanding.

I hope, my dear, you, in your turn, will be this useful and engaging friend to your younger companions, particularly to your sisters and brothers, who ought ever, unless they should prove unworthy, to be your nearest and dearest friends, whose interest and welfare you are bound to desire as much as your own. If you are wanting here, do not fancy yourself qualified for friendship with others, but, be assured, your heart is too narrow and selfish for so generous an affection.

Remember that the end of true friendship is the good of its object, and the cultivation of virtue, in two hearts emulous of each other, and desirous to perpetuate their society beyond the grave. Nothing can be more contrary to this end, than that mutual intercourse of flattery which some call friendship. A real friend will venture to displease me, rather

than indulge my faulty inclinations, or increase my natural frailties; she will endeavour to make me acquainted with myself, and will put me upon guarding the weak parts of my character.

Friendship, in the highest sense of the word, can only subsist between persons of strict integrity and true generosity. Before you fancy yourself possessed of such a treasure, you should examine the value of your own heart, and see how well it is qualified for so sacred a connexion: and then, a harder task remains, to find out whether the object of your affection is also endued with the same virtuous disposition. Youth and inexperience are ill able to penetrate into characters: the least appearance of good attracts their admiration, and they immediately suppose they have found the object they pursued.

It is a melancholy consideration, that the judgment can only be formed by experience, which generally comes too late for our own use, and is seldom accepted for that of others. I fear it is in vain for me to tell you what dangerous mistakes I made in the early choice of friends—how incapable I then was of finding out such as were fit for me, and how little I was acquainted with the true nature of friendship, when I thought myself most fervently engaged in it! I am sensible all this will hardly persuade you to choose by the eyes of others, or even to suspect that your own may be deceived. Yet, if you should give any weight to my observations, it may not be quite useless to mention to you some of the essential requisites in a friend, and to exhort you never to choose one in whom they are wanting.

The first of these is a deep and sincere regard for religion. If your friend draws her principles from the same source with yourself; if the Gospel precepts are the rule of her life, as well as yours—you will always know what to expect from her, and have one common standard of right and wrong to refer to, by which to regulate all material points of conduct. The woman who thinks lightly of sacred things, or who is ever heard to speak of them with levity or indifference, cannot reasonably be expected to pay a more serious regard to the laws of friendship, or to be uniformly punctual in the performance of any of the duties of society: take no such person to your bosom, however recommended by good-humour, wit, or any other qualification; nor let gaiety or thoughtlessness be deemed an excuse for offending in this important point: a person, habituated to the love and reverence of religion and virtue, no more wants the guard of serious consideration to restrain her from speaking disrespectfully of them, than to prevent her speaking ill of her dearest friend. In the liveliest hour of mirth, the innocent heart can dictate nothing but what is innocent: it will immediately take alarm at the apprehension of doing wrong, and stop at once, in the full career of youthful sprightliness, if reminded of the neglect or transgression of any duty. Watch for these symptoms of innocence and goodness; and admit no one to your entire affection, who would ever persuade you to make light of any sort of offence, or who can treat with levity or contempt any person or thing that bears a relation to religion.

A due regard to reputation is the next indispen-

sable qualification. "Have regard to thy name," saith the wise son of Sirach, "for that will continue with thee above a thousand great treasures of gold." The young person who is careless of blame, and indifferent to the esteem of the wise and prudent part of the world, is not only a most dangerous companion, but gives a certain proof of the want of rectitude in her own mind. Discretion is the guardian of all the virtues; and, when she forsakes them, they cannot long resist the attacks of an enemy. There is a profligacy of spirit in defying the rules of decorum, and despising censure, which seldom ends otherwise than in extreme corruption and utter ruin. Modesty and prudence are qualities that early display themselves, and are easily discerned: where these do not appear, you should avoid, not only friendship, but every step towards intimacy, lest your own character should suffer with that of your companion; but, where they shine forth in any eminent degree, you may safely cultivate an acquaintance, in the reasonable hope of finding the solid fruits of virtue beneath such sweet and promising blossoms: should you be disappointed, you will at least have run no risk in the search after them, and may cherish as a creditable acquaintance the person so adorned, though she may not deserve a place in your inmost heart.

The understanding must next be examined: and this is a point which requires so much understanding to judge of in another, that I must earnestly recommend to you, not to rely entirely on your own, but to take the opinion of your older friends. I do not wish you to seek for bright and uncommon talents, though these are sources of inexhaustible

delight and improvement, when found in company with solid judgment and sound principles. Good sense, (by which I mean a capacity for reasoning justly, and discerning truly) applied to the uses of life, and exercised in distinguishing characters and directing conduct, is alone *necessary* to an intimate connexion; but, without this, the best intentions, though certain of reward hereafter, may fail of producing their effects in this life; nor can they singly constitute the character of an useful and valuable friend. On the other hand, the most dazzling genius, or the most engaging wit and humour, can but ill answer the purposes of friendship, without plain common sense, and a faculty of just reasoning.

What can one do with those who will not be answered with reason; and who, when you are endeavouring to convince or persuade them by serious arguments, will parry the blow with a witty repartee, or a stroke of poignant raillery? I know not whether such a reply is less provoking than that of an obstinate fool, who answers your strongest reasons with, "What you say may be very true, but this is my way of thinking." A small acquaintance with the world will show you instances of the most absurd and foolish conduct in persons of brilliant parts and entertaining faculties. But how trifling is the talent of diverting an idle hour, compared with true wisdom and prudence, which are perpetually wanted to direct us safely and happily through life, and to make us useful and valuable to others!

Fancy, I know, will have her share in friendship, as well as in love: you must please as well as serve me, before I can love you as the friend of my heart.

But the faculties that please for an evening may not please for life. The humorous man soon runs through his stock of odd stories, mimicry, and jest; and the wit, by constant repeated flashes, confounds and tires one's intellect, instead of enlivening it with agreeable surprise: but good sense can neither tire nor wear out; it improves by exercise, and increases in value, the more it is known: the pleasure it gives in conversation is lasting and satisfactory, because it is accompanied with improvement; its worth is proportioned to the occasion that calls for it, and rises highest on the most interesting topics; the heart, as well as the understanding, finds its account in it; and our noblest interests are promoted by the entertainment we receive from such a companion.

A good temper is the next qualification; the value of which, in a friend, you will want no arguments to prove, when you are truly convinced of the necessity of it in yourself, which I shall endeavour to show you in a following letter. But as this is a quality in which you may be deceived, without a long and intimate acquaintance, you must not be hasty in forming connexions, before you have had sufficient opportunity for making observations on this head. A young person, when pleased and enlivened by the presence of her youthful companions, seldom shows ill temper, which must be extreme indeed, if it is not at least controllable in such situations. But you must watch her behaviour to her own family, and the degree of estimation she stands in with them. Observe her manner to servants and inferiors, to children, and even to animals:

see in what manner she bears disappointment, contradiction, and restraint; and what degree of vexation she expresses on any accident of loss or trouble. If, in such little trials, she shows a meek, resigned, and cheerful temper, she will probably preserve it on greater occasions; but if she is impatient and discontented under these, how will she support the far greater evils which may await her in her progress through life? If you should have an opportunity of seeing her in sickness, observe whether her complaints are of a mild and gentle kind, forced from her by pain, and restrained as much as possible; or whether they are expressions of a turbulent, rebellious mind, that hardly submits to the divine hand. See whether she is tractable, considerate, kind, and grateful to those about her; or whether she takes the opportunity which their compassion gives her, to tyrannise over, and torment them. Women are in general very liable to ill health, which must necessarily make them, in some measure, troublesome and disagreeable to those they live with. They should therefore take the more pains to lighten the burden as much as possible, by patience and good humour, and be careful not to let their infirmities break in on the health, freedom, or enjoyments of others, more than is needful and just. Some ladies seem to think it very improper for any person within their reach to enjoy a moment's comfort while they are in pain; and make no scruple of sacrificing to their own least convenience, whenever they are indisposed, the proper rest, meals, or refreshments of their servants, and even sometimes of their husbands and children. But their selfishness defeats

its own purpose, as it weakens that affection and tender pity which excites the most assiduous services, and affords the most healing balm to the heart of the sufferer.

I have already expressed my wishes that your chosen friend may be some years older than yourself; but this is an advantage not always to be obtained. Whatever be her age, *religion, discretion, good sense, and good temper*, must, on no account, be dispensed with; and, till you can find one so qualified, you had better make no closer connexion than that of a mutual intercourse of civilities and good offices. But if it is always your aim to mix with the best company, and to be worthy of such society, you will probably meet with some one among them deserving your affection, to whom you may be equally agreeable.

When I speak of the best company, I do not mean, in the common acceptation of the word, persons of high rank and fortune, but rather the most worthy and sensible. It is, however, very important to a young woman to be introduced into life on a respectable footing, and to converse with those whose manners and style of life may polish her behaviour, refine her sentiments, and give her consequence in the eye of the world. Your equals in rank are most proper for intimacy; but to be sometimes amongst your superiors, is every way desirable and advantageous, unless it should inspire you with pride, or with the foolish desire of emulating their grandeur and expense.

Above all things, avoid intimacy with those of low birth and education! nor think it a mark of humility to delight in such society; for it much

oftener proceeds from the meanest kind of pride—that of being the head of the company, and seeing your companions subservient to you. The servile flattery and submission, which usually recommend such people, and make amends for their ignorance and want of conversation, will infallibly corrupt your heart, and make all company insipid from whom you cannot expect the same homage. Your manners and faculties, instead of improving, must be continually lowered, to suit you to your companions; and, believe me, you will find it no easy matter to raise them again to a level with those of polite and well-informed people.

The greatest kindness and civility to inferiors is perfectly consistent with proper caution on this head. Treat them always with affability, and talk to them of their own affairs, with an affectionate interest; but never make them familiar, nor admit them as associates in your diversions: but, above all, never trust them with your secrets, which is putting yourself entirely in their power, and subjecting yourself to the most shameful slavery. The only reason for making choice of such confidants, must be the certainty that they will not venture to blame or contradict inclinations, which, you are conscious, no true friend would encourage. But this is a meanness into which I trust you are in no danger of falling. I rather hope you will have the laudable ambition of spending your time chiefly with those whose superior talents, education, and politeness, may continually improve you, and whose society will do you honour. However, let no advantage of this kind weigh against the want of principle. I have long ago resolved, with David, that, as far as

lies in my power, “I will not know a wicked person.” Nothing can compensate for the contagion of bad example, and for the danger of wearing off, by use, that abhorrence of evil actions and sentiments, which every innocent mind sets out with, but which an indiscriminate acquaintance in the world soon abates, and at length destroys.

If you are good, and seek friendship only among the good, I trust you will be happy enough to find it. The wise son of Sirach pronounces that you will. “A faithful friend,” saith he, “is the medicine of life; and he that feareth the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright; for as he is, so shall his neighbour be also.”—Ecclus. v. In the same admirable book, you will find directions how to choose and preserve a friend. Indeed, there is hardly a circumstance in life, concerning which you may not there meet with the best advice imaginable. Caution in making friendships is particularly recommended. “Be in peace with many, nevertheless have but one counsellor of a thousand. If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him; for some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of trouble. And there is a friend, who, being turned to enmity and strife, will discover thy reproach.”—Ecclus. vi. Again, “some friend is a companion at the table, and will not continue in the day of thy affliction; but in thy prosperity he will be as thyself, and will be bold over thy servants; if thou be brought low, he will be against thee, and will hide himself from thy face.”—chap. ix. 10. “Forsake not an old friend; for the new is not comparable to him. A

new friend is as new wine : when it is old, thou shalt drink it with pleasure."

When you have discreetly chosen, the next point is how to preserve your friend. Numbers complain of the fickleness and ingratitude of those on whom they bestowed their affection ; but few examine, whether what they complain of is not owing to themselves. Affection is not like a portion of freehold land, which, once settled upon you, is a possession for ever, without farther trouble on your part. If you grow less deserving, or less attentive to please, you must expect to see the effects of your remissness, in the gradual decline of your friend's esteem and attachment. Resentment and reproaches will not recall what you have lost ; but, on the contrary, will hasten the dissolution of every remaining tie : the best remedy is, to renew your care and assiduity to deserve and cultivate affection, without seeming to have perceived its abatement. Jealousy and distrust are the bane of friendship, whose essence is esteem and affiance : but if jealousy is expressed by unkind upbraidings, or, what is worse, by cold haughty looks and insolent contempt, it can hardly fail, if often repeated, to realize the misfortune, which at first perhaps was imaginary. Nothing can be more an antidote to affection than such behaviour, or than the cause of it, which, in reality, is nothing but pride ; though the jealous person would fain attribute it to uncommon tenderness and delicacy : but tenderness is never so expressed ; it is indeed deeply sensible of unkindness, but it cannot be unkind ; it may subsist with anger, but not with contempt ; it may be weakened, or even killed, by ingratitude ; but it cannot be changed

into hatred. Remember always, that if you would be *loved*, you must be *amiable*. Habit may, indeed, for a time, supply the deficiency of merit : what we have long loved we do not easily cease to love ; but habit will at length be conquered by frequent disgusts. “ Whoso casteth a stone at the birds, frayeth them away : and he that upbraideth his friend, breaketh friendship. Though thou drewest a sword at thy friend, despair not, for there may be a returning to favour. If thou hast opened thy mouth against thy friend, fear not, for there may be a reconciliation ; except for *upbraiding* or *pride*, or *disclosing of secrets*, or a *treacherous wound*,—for, for these things, every friend will depart.”—Eccles. xxii. 20.

I have hitherto spoken of a friend in the singular number, rather in compliance with the notions of most writers who have treated of friendship, and who generally suppose it can have but one object, than from my own ideas. The highest kind of friendship is indeed confined to one ; I mean the conjugal—which, in its perfection, is so entire and absolute an union of interest, will, and affection, as no other connexion can stand in competition with. But there are various degrees of friendship, which can admit of several objects esteemed, and delighted in for different qualities, and whose separate rights are perfectly compatible. Perhaps it is not possible to love two persons exactly in the same degree ; yet the difference may be so small, that none of the parties can be certain on which side the scale preponderates.

It is narrowness of mind to wish to confine your friend's affection solely to yourself ; since you are conscious that, however perfect your attachment

may be, you cannot possibly supply to her all the blessings she may derive from several friends, who may each love her as well as you do, and may each contribute largely to her happiness. If she depends on you alone for all the comforts and advantages of friendship, your absence or death may leave her desolate and forlorn. If, therefore, you prefer her good to your own selfish gratification, you should rather strive to multiply her friends, and be ready to embrace in your affections all who love her, and deserve her love : this generosity will bring its own reward, by multiplying the sources of your pleasures and supports ; and your first friend will love you the more for such an endearing proof of the extent of your affection, which can stretch to receive all who are dear to her. But if, on the contrary, every mark of esteem shown to another excites uneasiness or resentment in you, the person you love must soon feel her connexion with you a burden and restraint : she can own no obligation to so selfish an attachment, nor can her tenderness be increased by that which lessens her esteem. If she is really fickle and ungrateful, she is not worth your reproaches ; if not, she must be reasonably offended by such injurious imputations.

You do not want to be told, that the strictest fidelity is required in friendship : and though, possibly, instances might be brought, in which even the secret of a friend must be sacrificed to the calls of justice and duty, yet these are rare and doubtful cases ; and we may venture to pronounce that, “ Whoso discovereth secrets, loseth his credit, and shall never find a friend to his mind. Love thy friend, and be faithful unto him : but if thou bewrayest his secrets, follow no more after him. For as a

man that hath destroyed his enemy, so hast thou destroyed the love of thy friend. As one that letteth a bird go out of his hand, so hast thou let thy neighbour go. Follow no more after him, for he is too far off; he is as a roe escaped out of the snare. As for a wound, it may be bound up; and after revilings there may be reconciliation; but he that bewrayeth secrets is without hope."—Ecclus. xxvii. 16.

But, in order to reconcile this inviolable fidelity with the duty you owe to yourself or others, you must carefully guard against being made the repository of such secrets as are not fit to be kept. If your friend should engage in any unlawful pursuit: if, for instance, she should intend to carry on an affair of love, unknown to her parents, you must first use your utmost endeavours to dissuade her from it; and, if she persists, positively and solemnly declare against being a confidant in such a case. Suffer her not to speak to you on the subject, and warn her to forbear acquainting you with any step she may propose to take towards a marriage unsanctioned by parental approbation. Tell her, you would think it your duty to apprize her parents of the danger into which she was throwing herself. However unkind she may take this at the time, she will certainly esteem and love you the more for it, when she recovers a sense of her duty, or experiences the sad effects of swerving from it.

There is another case, which I should not choose to suppose possible, in addressing myself to so young a person, was it not that too many instances of it have of late been exposed to public animadversion: I mean the case of a married woman, who encourages or tolerates the addresses of a lover. May no

such person be ever called a friend of yours ! but if ever one whom, when innocent, you had loved, should fall into so fatal an error, I can only say that, after proper remonstrances, you must immediately withdraw from all intimacy and confidence with her. Nor let the absurd pretence of *innocent intentions*, in such circumstances, prevail with you to lend your countenance a moment to disgraceful conduct. There cannot be innocence in any degree of indulgence to unlawful passion. The sacred obligations of marriage are very ill understood by the wife, who can think herself innocent, while she parleys with a lover, or with love ; and who does not shut her heart and ears against the most distant approaches of either. A virtuous wife, though she should be so unhappy as not to be secured by having her strongest affections fixed on her husband, will never admit an idea of any other man, in the light of a lover ; but, if such an idea should unawares intrude into her mind, she would instantly stifle it, before it grew strong enough to give her much uneasiness : not to the most intimate friend, hardly to her own soul, would she venture to confess a weakness she would so sincerely abhor. Whenever, therefore, such infidelity of the heart is made a subject of confidence, depend upon it, the corruption has spread far, and has been fatally indulged. Enter not into her counsels : show her the danger she is in, and then withdraw yourself from it, whilst you are yet unsullied by contagion.

It has been supposed a duty of friendship to lay open every thought and every feeling of the heart to our friend. But I have just mentioned a case, in which this is not only unnecessary, but wrong.

A disgraceful inclination, which we resolve to conquer, should be concealed from every body, and is more easily subdued when denied the indulgence of talking of its object ; and, I think, there may be other instances, in which it would be most prudent to keep our thoughts concealed even from our dearest friend. Some things I would communicate to one friend, and not to another, whom perhaps I loved better ; because I might know that my first friend was not so well qualified as the other to counsel me on that particular subject : a natural bias on her mind, some prevailing opinion, or some connexion with persons concerned, might make her an improper confidant with regard to one particular, though qualified to be so on all other occasions.

This confidence of friendship is indeed one of its sweetest pleasures and greatest advantages. The human heart often stands in need of some kind and faithful partner of its cares, in whom it may repose all its weaknesses, and with whom it is sure of finding the tenderest sympathy. Far be it from me to shut up the heart with cold distrust and rigid caution, or to adopt the odious maxim, that “ we should live with a friend as if we were one day to become an enemy.” But we must not wholly abandon prudence in any sort of connexion ; since, when every guard is laid aside, our unbounded openness may injure others as well as ourselves. Secrets entrusted to us must be sacredly kept even from our nearest friend ; for we have no right to dispose of the secrets of others.

If there is danger in making an improper choice of friends, my dear child, how much more fatal

would it be to mistake in a stronger kind of attachment ; in that which leads to an irrevocable engagement for life ! yet so much more is the understanding blinded, when once the fancy is captivated, that it seems a desperate undertaking to convince a girl in love that she has mistaken the character of the man she prefers.

If the passions would wait for the decision of judgment, and if a young woman could have the same opportunities of examining into the real character of her lover, as into that of a female candidate for her friendship, the same rules might direct you in the choice of both ; for, marriage being the highest state of friendship, the qualities requisite in a friend are still more important in a husband. But young women know so little of the world, especially of the other sex ; and such pains are usually taken to deceive them—that they are every way unqualified to choose for themselves, upon their own judgment. Many a heart-ache shall I feel for you, my sweet girl, if I live a few years longer ! since, not only all your happiness in this world, but your advancement in religion and virtue, or your apostasy from every good principle you have been taught, will probably depend on the companion you fix to for life. Happy will it be for you, if you are wise and modest enough to withdraw from temptation, and preserve your heart free and open to receive the just recommendation of your parents : farther than a recommendation, I dare say, they will never go, in an affair, which, though it should be begun by them, ought never to be proceeded in without your free concurrence.

Whatever romantic notions you may hear or read

of, depend upon it, those matches are the happiest which are made on rational grounds ; on suitability of character, degree, and fortune ; on mutual esteem, and the prospect of a real and permanent friendship. Far be it from me to advise you to marry where you do not love ; a mercenary marriage is a detestable prostitution : but, on the other hand, an union formed upon mere personal liking, without the requisite foundation of esteem, without the sanction of parental approbation, and consequently, without the blessing of God, can be productive of nothing but misery and shame. The passion, to which every consideration of duty and prudence is sacrificed, instead of supplying the loss of all other advantages, will soon itself be changed into mutual distrust, repentance, reproaches, and finally, perhaps, into hatred : the distresses it brings will be void of every consolation ; you will have disgusted the friends who should be your support ; debased yourself in the eyes of the world ; and, what is much worse, in your own eyes, and even in those of your husband : above all, you will have offended that God, who alone can shield you from calamity.

From an act like this, I trust your duty and gratitude to your kind parents—the first of duties, next to that we owe to God, and inseparably connected with it—will effectually preserve you. But most young people think they have fulfilled their duty, if they refrain from actually marrying against prohibition : they suffer their affections, and even perhaps their word of honour, to be engaged, without consulting their parents ; yet satisfy themselves with resolving not to marry without their consent ; not

considering that, besides the wretched, useless, uncomfortable state they plunge *themselves* into, when they contract a hopeless engagement, they must likewise involve a *parent* in the miserable dilemma of either giving a forced consent against his judgment, or of seeing his beloved child pine away her prime of life in fruitless anxiety; seeing her accuse him of tyranny, because he restrains her from certain ruin; seeing her affections alienated from her family; and all her thoughts engrossed by one object, to the destruction of her health and spirits, and of all improvements and occupations. What a cruel alternative for parents, whose happiness is bound up with that of their child! The time to consult them is before you have given a lover the least encouragement; nor ought you to listen a moment to the man who would wish you to keep his addresses secret; since he thereby shows himself conscious that they are not fit to be encouraged.

But perhaps I have said enough on this subject at present; though, if ever advice on such a topic can be of use, it must be before passion has got possession of the heart, and silenced both reason and principle. Fix therefore in your mind, as deeply as possible, those rules of duty and prudence, which now seem reasonable to you, that they may be at hand in the hour of trial, and save you from the miseries, in which strong affections, unguided by discretion, involve so many of our sex.

If you love virtue sincerely, you will be incapable of loving an openly vicious character. But, alas! your innocent heart may be easily ensnared by an artful one; and from this danger nothing can

secure you but the experience of those, to whose guidance God has entrusted you. May you be wise enough to make use of it ! So will you have the fairest chance of attaining the best blessings this world can afford, in a faithful and virtuous union with a worthy man, who may direct your steps in safety and honour through this life, and partake with you the rewards of virtue in that which is to come. But, if this happy lot should be denied you, do not be afraid of a single life. A worthy woman is never destitute of valuable friends, who, in a great measure, supply to her the want of nearer connexions : she can never be slighted or disesteemed, while her good temper and benevolence render her a blessing to her companions. Nay, she must be honoured by all persons of sense and virtue, for preferring the single state to an union unworthy of her. The calamities of an unhappy marriage are so much greater than can befall a single person, that the unmarried woman may find abundant argument to be contented with her condition, when pointed out to her by Providence. Whether married or single, if your first care is to please God, you will undoubtedly be a blessed creature ; “ for that which he delights in *must be happy*.” How earnestly I wish you this happiness, you can never know, unless you could read the heart of

Your truly affectionate.

VI.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TEMPER.

THE next great point of importance to your future happiness, my dear, is what your parents have, doubtless, been continually attentive to from your infancy, as it is impossible to undertake it too early—I mean the due regulation of your temper. Though you are, in great measure, indebted to their forming hands for whatever is good in it, you are sensible, no doubt, as every human creature is, of propensities to some infirmity of temper, which it must now be *your own* care to correct and to subdue : otherwise the pains that have hitherto been taken with you may all become fruitless : and, when you are your own mistress, you may relapse into those faults, which were originally in your nature, and which will require to be diligently watched and kept under, through the whole course of your life.

If you consider, that the constant tenor of the Gospel precepts is to promote love, peace, and good-will amongst men, you will not doubt that the cultivation of an amiable disposition is a great part of your religious duty ; since nothing leads more directly to the breach of charity, and to the injury and molestation of our fellow-creatures, than the indulgence of an ill temper. Do not therefore think lightly of the offences you may commit, for want of a due command over it, or suppose yourself

responsible for them to your fellow-creatures only ; but, be assured, you must give a strict account of them all to the Supreme Governor of the world, who has made this a great part of your appointed trial upon earth.

A woman, bred up in a religious manner, placed above the reach of want, and out of the way of sordid or scandalous vices, can have but few temptations to the flagrant breach of the divine laws. It particularly concerns her therefore to understand them in their full import, and to consider, how far she trespasses against them, by such actions as appear trivial, when compared with murder, adultery, and theft, but which become of very great importance, by being frequently repeated, and occurring in the daily transactions of life.

The principal virtues or vices of a woman must be of a private and domestic kind. Within the circle of her own family and dependents lies her sphere of action ; the scene of almost all those tasks and trials, which must determine her character, and her fate, here and hereafter. Reflect, for a moment, how much the happiness of her husband, children, and servants, must depend on her temper, and you will see that the greatest good or evil which she ever may have in her power to do, may arise from her correcting or indulging its infirmities.

Though I wish the principle of duty towards God to be your ruling motive in the exercise of every virtue, yet, as human nature stands in need of all possible helps, let us not forget how essential it is to present happiness, and to the enjoyment of this life, to cultivate such a temper as is likewise

indispensably requisite to the attainment of higher felicity in the life to come. The greatest outward blessings cannot afford enjoyment to a mind ruffled and uneasy within itself: a fit of ill humour will spoil the finest entertainment, and is as real a torment as the most painful disease. Another unavoidable consequence of ill temper is the dislike and aversion of all who are witnesses to it, and, perhaps, the deep and lasting resentment of those who suffer from its effects. We all, from social or self-love, earnestly desire the esteem and affection of our fellow-creatures; and indeed our condition makes them so necessary to us, that the wretch who has forfeited them, must feel desolate and undone, deprived of all the best enjoyments and comforts the world can afford, and given up to his inward misery, unpitied and scorned. But this can never be the fate of a good-natured person: whatever faults he may have, they will generally be treated with lenity; he will find an advocate in every human heart; his errors will be lamented rather than abhorred; and his virtues will be viewed in the fairest point of light: his good-humour, without the help of great talents or acquirements, will make his company preferable to that of the most brilliant genius, in whom this quality is wanting; in short, it is almost impossible that you can be sincerely beloved by any body, without this engaging property, whatever other excellences you may possess; but, with it, you will scarcely fail of finding some friends and favourers, even though you should be destitute of almost every other advantage.

Perhaps you will say, "all this is very true, but

our tempers are not in our own power; we are made with different dispositions; and, if mine is not amiable, it is rather my unhappiness than my fault." This, my dear, is commonly said by those who will not take the trouble to correct themselves. Yet, be assured, it is a delusion, and will not avail in our justification before him, "who knoweth whereof we are made," and of what we are capable. It is true, we are not all equally happy in our dispositions; but human virtue consists in cherishing and cultivating every good inclination, and in checking and subduing every propensity to evil. If you had been born with a bad temper, it might have been made a good one, at least with regard to its outward effects, by education, reason, and principle: and, though you are so happy as to have a good one while young, do not suppose it will always continue so, if you neglect to maintain a proper command over it. Power, sickness, disappointments, or worldly cares, may corrupt and embitter the finest disposition, if they are not counteracted by reason and religion.

It is observed that every temper is inclined, in some degree, either to passion, peevishness, or obstinacy. Many are so unfortunate as to be inclined to each of the three in turn: it is necessary therefore to watch the bent of our nature, and to apply the remedies proper for the infirmity to which we are most liable. With regard to the first, it is so injurious to society, and so odious in itself, especially in the female character, that one would think shame alone would be sufficient to preserve a young woman from giving way to it; for it is as unbecoming her character to be betrayed into ill-be-

haviour by *passion* as by *intoxication*, and she ought to be ashamed of the one as much as of the other. Gentleness, meekness, and patience, are peculiar distinctions; and an enraged woman is one of the most disgusting sights in nature.

It is plain, from experience, that the most passionate people can command themselves, when they have a motive sufficiently strong, such as the presence of those they fear, or to whom they particularly desire to recommend themselves; it is therefore no excuse to persons, whom you have injured by unkind reproaches and unjust aspersions, to tell them you was in a passion: the allowing yourself to speak to them in a passion is a proof of an insolent disrespect, which the meanest of your fellow-creatures would have a right to resent. When once you find yourself heated so far as to desire to say what you know would be provoking and wounding to another, you should immediately resolve either to be silent, or to quit the room, rather than give utterance to any thing dictated by so bad an inclination. Be assured, you are then unfit to reason or to reprove, or to hear reason from others. It is therefore your part to retire from such an occasion to sin, and wait till you are cool, before you presume to judge of what has passed. By accustoming yourself thus to conquer and disappoint your anger, you will, by degrees, find it grow weak and manageable, so as to leave your reason at liberty: you will be able to restrain your tongue from evil, and your looks and gestures from all expressions of violence and ill-will. Pride, which produces so many evils in the human mind, is the great source of passion. Whoever cultivates in

himself a proper humility, a due sense of his own faults and insufficiencies, and a due respect for others, will find but small temptation to violent or unreasonable anger.

In the case of real injuries, which justify and call for resentment, there is a noble and generous kind of anger, a proper and necessary part of our nature, which has nothing in it sinful or degrading. I would not wish you insensible to this ; for the person who feels not an injury, must be incapable of being properly affected by benefits. With those who treat you ill without provocation, you ought to maintain your own dignity : but, in order to do this, whilst you show a sense of their improper behaviour, you must preserve calmness, and even good-breeding ; and thereby convince them of the impotence as well as injustice of their malice. You must also weigh every circumstance with candour and charity, and consider whether your showing the resentment deserved may not produce ill consequences to innocent persons ; as is almost always the case in family quarrels ; and whether it may not occasion the breach of some duty, or necessary connexion, to which you ought to sacrifice even your just resentments. Above all things, take care that a particular offence to you does not make you unjust to the general character of the offending person. Generous anger does not preclude esteem for whatever is really estimable, nor does it destroy good-will to the person of its object ; it even inspires the desire of overcoming him by benefits, and wishes to inflict no other punishment than the regret of having injured one who deserved his kindness : it is always placable, and ready to be recon-

ciled, as soon as the offender is convinced of his error; nor can any subsequent injury provoke it to recur to past disobligations, which had been once forgiven. But it is perhaps unnecessary to give rules for this case. The consciousness of injured innocence naturally produces dignity, and usually prevents excess of anger: our passion is most unruly, when we are conscious of blame, and when we apprehend that we have laid ourselves open to contempt. Where we know we have been wrong, the least injustice, in the degree of blame imputed to us, excites our bitterest resentment; but where we know ourselves faultless, the sharpest accusation excites pity or contempt rather than rage. Whenever therefore you feel yourself very angry, suspect yourself to be in the wrong, and resolve to stand the decision of your own conscience before you cast upon another the punishment, which is perhaps due to yourself. This self-examination will at least give you time to cool; and, if you are just, will dispose you to balance your own wrong with that of your antagonist, and to settle the account with him on equal terms.

Peevishness, though not so violent and fatal in its immediate effects, is still more unamiable than passion, and, if possible, more destructive of happiness, inasmuch as it operates more continually. Though the fretful man injures us less, he disgusts us more than the passionate one; because he betrays a low and little mind, intent on trifles, and engrossed by a paltry self-love, which knows not how to bear the very apprehension of any inconvenience. It is self-love then which we must combat, when we find ourselves assaulted by this infirmity;

and, by voluntarily enduring inconveniences, we shall habituate ourselves to bear them with ease and good-humour, when occasioned by others. Perhaps this is the best kind of religious mortification, as the chief end of denying ourselves any innocent indulgences must be to acquire a habit of command over our passions and inclinations, particularly such as are likely to lead us into evil. Another method of conquering this enemy, is to abstract our minds from that attention to trifling circumstances, which usually creates this uneasiness. Those who are engaged in high and important pursuits are very little affected by small inconveniences. The man whose head is full of studious thought, or whose heart is full of care, will eat his dinner without knowing whether it was well or ill dressed, or whether it was served punctually at the hour or not : and though absence from the common things of life is far from desirable, especially in a woman ; yet too minute and anxious an attention to them seldom fails to produce a teasing, mean, and fretful disposition. I would therefore wish your mind to have always some object in pursuit worthy of it, that it may not be engrossed by such as are in themselves scarce worth a moment's anxiety. It is chiefly in the decline of life, when amusements fail, and when the more importunate passions subside, that this infirmity is observed to grow upon us ; and perhaps it will seldom fail to do so, unless carefully watched, and counteracted by reason. We must then endeavour to substitute some pursuits in the place of those, which can only engage us in the beginning of our course. The pursuit of glory and happiness in another life, by every means of

improving and exalting our own minds, becomes more and more interesting to us, the nearer we draw to the end of all sublunary enjoyments. Reading, reflection, rational conversation, and, above all, conversing with God, by prayer and meditation, may preserve us from taking that anxious interest in the little comforts and conveniences of our remaining days, which usually gives birth to so much fretfulness in old people. But though the aged and infirm are most liable to this evil, and they alone are to be pitied for it ; yet we sometimes see the young, the healthy, and those who enjoy most outward blessings, inexcusably guilty of it. The smallest disappointment in pleasure, or difficulty in the most trifling employment, will put wilful young people out of temper, and their very amusements frequently become sources of vexation and peevishness. How often have I seen a girl, preparing for a ball, or for some other public appearance, unable to satisfy her own vanity, fret over every ornament she put on, quarrel with her maid, with her clothes, her hair ; and growing still more unlovely as she grew more cross, be ready to fight with her looking-glass, for not making her as handsome as she wished to be ! She did not consider that the traces of this ill-humour on her countenance would be a greater disadvantage to her appearance than any defect in her dress, or even than the plainest features, enlivened by joy and good humour. There is a degree of resignation necessary even to the enjoyment of pleasure ; we must be ready and willing to give up some part of what we could wish for, before we can enjoy that which is indulged to us. I have no doubt that she who frets all the while she is dress-

ing for an assembly, will suffer still greater uneasiness when she is there. The same craving restless vanity will there endure a thousand mortifications, which, in the midst of seeming pleasure, will secretly corrode her heart; whilst the meek and humble generally find more gratification than they expected, and return home pleased and enlivened from every scene of amusement, though they could have stayed away from it with perfect ease and contentment.

Sullenness, or obstinacy, is perhaps a worse fault of temper than either of the former; and, if indulged, may end in the most fatal extremes of stubborn melancholy, malice, and revenge. The resentment which, instead of being expressed, is nursed in secret, and continually aggravated by the imagination, will, in time, become the ruling passion; and then, how horrible must be his case, whose kind and pleasurable affections are all swallowed up by the tormenting as well as detestable sentiments of hatred and revenge! “Admonish thy friend; peradventure he hath not done it: or, if he hath, that he do it no more.—Admonish thy friend; peradventure he hath not said it: or, if he hath, that he speak it not again.”—Ecclus. xix. 13. Brood not over a resentment which perhaps was at first ill-grounded, and which is undoubtedly heightened by a heated imagination: but, when you have first subdued your own temper, so as to be able to speak calmly, reasonably, and kindly; then expostulate with the person you suppose to be in fault; hear what she has to say; and either reconcile yourself to her, or quiet your mind under the injury by the principle of Christian charity. But

if it should appear that you yourself have been most to blame, or if you have been in an error, acknowledge it fairly and handsomely : if you feel any reluctance to do so, be certain that it arises from pride, to conquer which is an absolute duty. “ A soft answer turneth away wrath,” and a generous confession oftentimes more than atones for the fault which requires it. Truth and justice demand that we should acknowledge conviction, as soon as we feel it, and not maintain an erroneous opinion, or justify a wrong conduct, merely from the false shame of confessing our past ignorance. A false shame it undoubtedly is, and as impolitic as unjust, since your error is already seen by those who endeavour to set you right ; but your conviction, and the candour and generosity of owning it freely, may still be an honour to you, and would greatly recommend you to the person with whom you disputed. With a disposition strongly inclined to sullenness or obstinacy, this must be a very painful exertion ; and to make a perfect conquest over yourself at once may perhaps appear impracticable, whilst the zeal of self-justification, and the abhorrence of blame, are strong upon you. But if you are so unhappy as to yield to your infirmity, at one time, do not let this discourage you from renewing your efforts : your mind will gain strength from the contest, and your internal enemy will, by degrees, be forced to give ground. Be not afraid to revive the subject, as soon as you find yourself able to subdue your temper ; and then frankly lay open the conflict you sustained at the time : by this you will make all the amends in your power for your fault, and will certainly change the disgust you have given

into pity at least, if not admiration. Nothing is more endearing than such a confession ; and you will find such a satisfaction in your own consciousness, and in the renewed tenderness and esteem you will gain from the person concerned, that your task for the future will be made more easy, and your reluctance to be convinced will, on every occasion, grow less and less.

The love of truth, and a real desire of improvement, ought to be the only motives of argumentation ; and, where these are sincere, no difficulty can be made of embracing the truth, as soon as it is perceived. But, in fact, people oftener dispute from vanity and pride, which make it a grievous mortification to allow that we are the wiser for what we have heard from another. To receive advice, reproof, and instruction, properly, is the surest sign of a sincere and humble heart ; and shows a greatness of mind, which commands our respect and reverence, while it appears so willingly to yield to us the superiority.

Observe, notwithstanding, that I do not wish you to hear of your faults without pain : such an indifference would afford small hopes of amendment. Shame and remorse are the first steps to true repentance ; yet we should be willing to bear this pain, and thankful to the kind hand that inflicts it for our good. Nor must we, by sullen silence under it, leave our kind physician in doubt, whether the operation has taken effect or not, or whether it has not added another malady, instead of curing the first. You must consider, that those who tell you of your faults, if they do it from motives of kindness, and not of malice, exert their friendship

in a painful office, which must have cost them as great an effort as it can be to you to acknowledge the service ; and, if you refuse this encouragement, you cannot expect that any one, who is not absolutely obliged to it by duty, will a second time undertake such an ill-requited trouble. What a loss would this be to yourself !—how difficult would be our progress to that degree of perfection which is necessary to our happiness, was it not for the assistance we receive from each other ! This certainly is one of the means of grace held out to us by our merciful Judge ; and if we reject it, we are answerable for all the miscarriages we may fall into for want of it.

I know not, whether that strange caprice, that inequality of taste and behaviour, so commonly attributed to our sex, may be properly called a fault of temper ; as it seems not to be connected with, or arising from our animal frame, but to be rather the fruit of our own self-indulgence, degenerating, by degrees, into such a wantonness of will, as knows not how to please itself. When, instead of regulating our actions by reason and principle, we suffer ourselves to be guided by every slight and momentary impulse of inclination, we shall, doubtless, appear so variable and inconstant, that nobody can guess, by our behaviour to-day, what may be expected from us to-morrow ; nor can we ourselves tell whether what we delighted in a week ago, will now afford us the least degree of pleasure. It is in vain for others to attempt to please us ; we cannot please ourselves, though all we could wish for waits our choice : and thus does a capricious woman become “ sick of herself, through very selfishness :”

and, when this is the case, it is easy to judge how sick others must be of her, and how contemptible and disgusting she must appear. This wretched state is the usual consequence of power and flattery. May my dear child never meet with the temptation of that excessive and ill-judged indulgence from a husband, which she has happily escaped from her parents, and which seldom fails to reduce women to the miserable condition of a humoured child, always unhappy from having nobody's will to study but its own ! The insolence of such demands for yourself, and such disregard to the choice and inclinations of others, can seldom fail to make you as many enemies as there are persons obliged to bear with your humours ; whilst a compliant, reasonable, and contented disposition, would render you happy in yourself, and beloved by all your companions ; particularly by those who live constantly with you : and of what consequence this is to your happiness, a moment's reflection will convince you. Family friendships are the friendships made for us, if I may so speak, by God himself. With the kindest intentions, he has knit the bands of family love by indispensable duties ; and wretched are they who have burst them asunder by violence and ill-will, or worn them out by constant little disobligations, and by the want of that attention to please, which the presence of a stranger always inspires, but which is so often shamefully neglected towards those whom it is most our duty and interest to please. May you, my dear, be wise enough to see that every faculty of entertainment, every engaging qualification which you possess, is exerted to the best advantage for those, whose love is of

most importance to you ; for those who live under the same roof, and with whom you are connected for life, either by the ties of blood, or by the still more sacred obligations of a voluntary engagement.

To make you the delight and darling of your family, something more is required than barely to be exempt from ill-temper and troublesome humours. The sincere and genuine smiles of complacency and love must adorn your countenance. That ready compliance, that alertness to assist and oblige, which demonstrates true affection, must animate your behaviour, and endear your most common actions. Politeness must accompany your greatest familiarities, and restrain you from every thing that is really offensive, or which can give a moment's unnecessary pain. Conversation, which is so apt to grow dull and insipid in families, nay, in some to be almost wholly laid aside, must be cultivated with the frankness and openness of friendship, and by the mutual communication of whatever may conduce to the improvement or innocent entertainment of each other.

Reading, whether apart or in common, will furnish useful and pleasing subjects ; and the sprightliness of youth will naturally inspire harmless mirth and native humour, if encouraged by a mutual desire of diverting each other, and making the hours pass agreeably in your own house : every amusement that offers will be heightened by the participation of these dear companions, and by talking over every incident together, and every object of pleasure. If you have any acquired talent of entertainment, such as music, painting, or the like, your own family are those before whom you should most wish to ex-

cel, and for whom you should always be ready to exert yourself; not suffering the accomplishments which you have gained, perhaps by their means, and at their expense, to lie dormant, till the arrival of a stranger gives you spirit in the performance. Where this last is the case, you may be sure vanity is the only motive of the exertion: a stranger will praise you more: but how little sensibility has that heart, which is not more gratified by the silent pleasure painted on the countenance of a partial parent, or of an affectionate brother, than by the empty compliment of a visitor, who is perhaps inwardly more disposed to criticise and ridicule than to admire you!

I have been longer in this letter than I intended, yet it is with difficulty I can quit the subject, because I think it is seldom sufficiently insisted on, either in books or in sermons; and because there are many persons weak enough to believe themselves in a safe and innocent course of life, whilst they are daily harassing every body about them by their vexatious humours. But you will, I hope, constantly bear in mind, that you can never treat a fellow-creature unkindly, without offending the kind Creator and Father of all; and that you can no way render yourself so acceptable to him, as by studying to promote the happiness of others, in every instance, small as well as great. The favour of God, and the love of your companions, will surely be deemed rewards sufficient to animate your most fervent endeavours: yet this is not all; the disposition of mind, which I would recommend, is its own reward, and is in itself essential to happiness. Cultivate it, therefore, my dear child, with your

utmost diligence ; and watch the symptoms of ill-temper, as they rise, with a firm resolution to conquer them, before they are even perceived by any other person. In every such inward conflict, call upon your Maker to assist the feeble nature he hath given you ; and sacrifice to him every feeling that would tempt you to disobedience : so will you at length attain the true Christian meekness, which is blessed in the sight of God and man—" which has the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come." Then will you pity, in others, those infirmities, which you have conquered in yourself ; and will think yourself as much bound to assist, by your patience and gentleness, those who are so unhappy as to be under the dominion of evil passions, as you are to impart a share of your riches to the poor and miserable.

Adieu, my dearest.

VII.

ON ECONOMY.

MY DEAR NIECE,

ECONOMY is so important a part of a woman's character, so necessary to her own happiness, and so essential to her performing properly the duties of a wife and of a mother, that it ought to have the precedence of all other accomplishments, and take its rank next to the first duties of life. It is, moreover, an *art* as well as a *virtue*; and, many well-meaning persons, from ignorance, or from inconsideration, are strangely deficient in it. Indeed, it is too often wholly neglected in a young woman's education; and she is sent from her father's house to govern a family, without the least degree of that knowledge which should qualify her for it: this is the source of much inconvenience; for though experience and attention may supply, by degrees, the want of instruction, yet this requires time: the family, in the mean time, may get into habits which are very difficult to alter; and, what is worse, the husband's opinion of his wife's incapacity may be fixed too strongly to suffer him ever to think justly of her gradual improvements. I would therefore earnestly advise you to make use of every opportunity you can find, for the laying in some store of knowledge on this subject, before you are called upon to the practice; by observing what passes be-

fore you ; by consulting prudent and experienced mistresses of families ; and by entering in a book a memorandum of every new piece of intelligence you acquire : you may afterwards compare these with more mature observations, and you can make additions and corrections, as you see occasion. I hope it will not be long before your mother entrusts you with some part, at least, of the management of your father's house. Whilst you are under her eye, your ignorance cannot do much harm, though the relief to her at first may not be near so considerable as the benefit to yourself.

Economy consists of so many branches, some of which descend to such minuteness, that it is impossible for me in writing to give you particular directions. The rude outlines may be perhaps described ; and I shall be happy if I can furnish you with any hint that may hereafter be usefully employed.

The first and greatest point is to lay out your general plan of living in a just proportion to your fortune and rank : if these two will not coincide, the last must certainly give way ; for, if you have right principles, you cannot fail of being wretched under the sense of the injustice as well as danger of spending beyond your income, and your distress will be continually increasing. No mortifications, which you can suffer from retrenching in your appearance, can be comparable to this unhappiness. If you would enjoy the real comforts of affluence, you should lay your plan considerably within your income ; not for the pleasure of amassing wealth ; though, where there is a growing family, it is an absolute duty to lay by something every year ; but

to provide for contingencies, and to have the power of indulging your choice in the disposal of the overplus, either in innocent pleasures, or to increase your funds for charity and generosity, which are in fact the true funds of pleasure. In some circumstances indeed, this would not be prudent : there are professions in which a man's success greatly depends on his making some figure, where the bare suspicion of poverty would bring on the reality. If by marriage you should be placed in such a situation, it will be your duty to exert all your skill in the management of your income : yet, even in this case, I would not strain to the utmost for appearance, but would choose my models among the most prudent and moderate of my own class ; and be contented with slower advancement, for the sake of security and peace of mind.

A contrary conduct is the ruin of many ; and, in general, the wives of men in such professions might live in a more retired and frugal manner than they do, without any ill consequences, if they did not make the scheme of advancing the success of their husbands an excuse to themselves for the indulgence of their own vanity and ambition.

Perhaps it may be said, that the settling the general scheme of expenses is seldom the wife's province, and that many men do not choose even to acquaint her with the real state of their affairs. Where this is the case, a woman can be answerable for no more than is entrusted to her. But I think it a very ill sign, for one or both of the parties, where there is such a want of openness, in what equally concerns them. As I trust you will deserve the confidence of your husband, so I hope you will

be allowed free consultation with him on your mutual interest; and, I believe, there are few men who would not hearken to reason on their own affairs, when they saw a wife ready and desirous to give up her share of vanities and indulgences, and only earnest to promote the common good of the family.

In order to settle your plan, it will be necessary to make a pretty exact calculation: and if, from this time, you accustom yourself to calculations, in all the little expenses entrusted to you, you will grow expert and ready at them, and be able to guess very nearly, where certainty cannot be obtained. Many articles of expense are regular and fixed; these may be valued exactly; and by consulting with experienced persons, you may calculate nearly the amount of others: any material article of consumption, in a family of any given number and circumstances, may be estimated pretty nearly. Your own expenses of clothes and pocket-money should be settled and circumscribed, that you may be sure not to exceed the just proportion. I think it an admirable method to appropriate such a portion of your income, as you judge proper to bestow in charity, to be sacredly kept for that purpose, and no longer considered as your own: by which means, you will avoid the temptation of giving less than you ought, through selfishness, or more than you ought, through good-nature or weakness. If your circumstances allow of it, you might set apart another fund, for acts of liberality or friendship, which do not come under the head of charity. The having such funds ready at hand, makes it easy and pleasant to give; and when acts of bounty are per-

formed without effort, they are generally done more kindly and effectually. If you are obliged in conscience to lay up for a family, the same method of an appropriated fund for saving will be of excellent use, as it will prevent that continual, and often ineffectual anxiety, which a general desire of saving, without having fixed the limits, is sure to create.

Regularity of payments and accounts is essential to economy : your housekeeping should be settled at least once a week, and all the bills paid ; all other tradesmen should be paid, at farthest, once a year. Indeed I think it more advantageous to pay oftener ; but if you make them trust you longer, they must either charge proportionably higher, or be losers by your custom. Numbers of them fail, every year, from the cruel cause of being obliged to give their customers so much longer credit than the dealers, from whom they take their goods, will allow to them. If people of fortune considered this, they would not defer their payments, from mere negligence, as they often do, to the ruin of whole families.

You must endeavour to acquire skill in purchasing : in order to this, you should begin now to attend to the prices of things, and take every proper opportunity of learning the real value of every thing, as well as the marks whereby you are to distinguish the good from the bad.

In your table, as in your dress, and in all other things, I wish you to aim at *propriety* and *neatness*, or, if your state demands it, *elegance*, rather than *superfluous figure*. To go beyond your sphere, either in dress, or in the appearance of your table, indicates a greater fault in your character, than to

be too much within it. It is impossible to enter into the *minutiæ* of the table: good sense and observation on the best models must form your taste, and a due regard to what you can afford must restrain it.

Ladies who are fond of needle-work, generally choose to consider that as a principal part of good housewifery; and though I cannot look upon it as of equal importance with the due regulation of a family, yet, in a middling rank, and with a moderate fortune, it is a necessary part of a woman's duty, and a considerable article in expense is saved by it. Many young ladies make almost every thing they wear; by which means they can make a genteel figure at a small expense. This, in your station, is the most profitable and desirable kind of work; and as much of it as you can do, consistently with a due attention to your health, to the improvement of your mind, and to the discharge of other duties, I should think highly commendable. But, as I do not wish you to impose upon the world by your appearance, I should be contented to see you worse dressed, rather than see your whole time employed in preparations for it, or any of those hours given to it, which are needful to make your body strong and active by exercise, or your mind rational by reading. Absolute idleness is inexcusable in a woman, because the needle is always at hand for those intervals in which she cannot be otherwise employed. If you are industrious, and if you keep good hours, you will find time for all your proper employments. Early rising, and a good disposition of time, are essential to economy. The necessary orders, and examination into household affairs,

should be dispatched as soon in the day, and as privately, as possible, that they may not interrupt your husband or guests, or break in upon conversation, or reading, in the remainder of the day. If you defer any thing that is necessary, you may be tempted by company, or by unforeseen avocations, to forget or to neglect it: hurry and irregularity will ensue, with expensive expedients to supply the defect.

There is in many people, and particularly in youth, a strange aversion to regularity; a desire to delay what ought to be done immediately, in order to do something else, which might as well be done afterwards. Be assured, it is of more consequence to you than you can conceive, to get the better of this idle procrastinating spirit, and to acquire habits of constancy and steadiness, even in the most trifling matters; without them there can be no regularity, or consistency of action or character; no dependence on your best intentions, which a sudden humour may tempt you to lay aside for a time, and which a thousand unforeseen accidents will afterwards render it more and more difficult to execute: no one can say what important consequences may follow a trivial neglect of this kind. For example, I have known one of these procrastinators disoblige, and gradually lose very valuable friends, by delaying to write to them so long, that, having no good excuse to offer, she could not get courage enough to write at all, and dropped their correspondence entirely.

The neatness and order of your house and furniture, is a part of economy which will greatly affect your appearance and character, and to which you

must yourself give attention, since it is not possible even for the *rich* and *great* to rely wholly on the care of servants, in such points, without their being often neglected. The more magnificently a house is furnished, the more one is disgusted with that air of confusion, which often prevails where attention is wanting in the owner : but, on the other hand, there is a kind of neatness, which gives a lady the air of a house-maid, and makes her excessively troublesome to every body, and particularly to her husband : in this, as in all other branches of economy, I wish you to avoid all parade and bustle. Those ladies who pique themselves on the particular excellence of neatness, are very apt to forget that the decent order of the house should be designed to promote the convenience and pleasure of those who are to be in it ; and that if it is converted into a cause of trouble and constraint, their husbands and guests would be happier without it. The love of fame, that universal passion, will sometimes show itself on strangely insignificant subjects ; and a person who acts for praise only, will always go beyond the mark in every thing. The best sign of a house being well governed is, that nobody's attention is called to any of the little affairs of it ; but all goes on so well of course, that one is not led to make remarks upon any thing, nor to observe any extraordinary effort that produces the general result of ease and elegance, which prevails throughout.

Domestic economy, and the credit and happiness of a family, depend so much on the choice and proper regulation of servants, that it must be considered as an essential part both of prudence and

duty. Those who keep a great number of them, have a heavy charge on their consciences, and ought to think themselves in some measure responsible for the morals and happiness of so many of their fellow-creatures, designed like themselves for immortality. Indeed, the cares of domestic management are by no means lighter to persons of high rank and fortune, if they perform their duty, than to those of a retired station. It is with a family, as with a commonwealth, the more numerous and luxurious it becomes, the more difficult it is to govern it properly. Though the great are placed above the little attentions and employments to which a private gentlewoman must dedicate much of her time, they have a larger and more important sphere of action, in which, if they are indolent and neglectful, the whole government of their house and fortune must fall into irregularity. Whatever number of deputies they may employ to overlook their affairs, they must themselves overlook those deputies, and be ultimately answerable for the conduct of the whole: the characters of those servants who are entrusted with power over the rest, cannot be too nicely inquired into; and the mistress of the family must be ever watchful over their conduct; at the same time, that she must carefully avoid every appearance of suspicion, which, whilst it wounds and hinders a worthy servant, only excites the artifice and cunning of an unjust one.

None, who pretend to be friends of religion and virtue, should ever keep a domestic, however expert in business, whom they know to be guilty of immorality. How unbecoming a serious character is it, to say of such an one, "He is a bad man, but

a good servant !” What a preference does it show of private convenience to the interests of society, which demand that vice should be constantly discountenanced, especially in every one’s own household ; and that the sober, honest, and industrious, should be sure of finding encouragement and reward, in the houses of those who maintain respectable characters ! Such persons should be invariably strict and peremptory with regard to the behaviour of their servants, in every thing which concerns the general plan of domestic government ; but should by no means be severe on small faults, since nothing so much weakens authority as frequent chiding. Whilst they require precise obedience to their rules, they must prove, by their general conduct, that these rules are the effect, not of humour, but of reason. It is wonderful that those, who are careful to conceal their ill-temper from strangers, should be indifferent how peevish, and even contemptibly capricious, they appear before their servants, on whom their good name so much depends, and from whom they can hope for no real respect, when their weakness is so apparent. When once a servant can say, “ I cannot do any thing to please my mistress to-day,” all authority is lost.

Those who continually change their servants, and complain of perpetual ill usage, have good reason to believe that the fault is in themselves, and that they do not know how to govern. Few indeed possess the skill to unite authority with kindness, or are capable of that steady and uniformly reasonable conduct, which alone can maintain true dignity, and command a willing and attentive obedience. Let us not forget that human nature is the same in all

stations. If you can convince your servants, that you have a generous and considerate regard to their health, their interest, and their reasonable gratifications ; that you impose no commands but what are fit and right, nor ever reprove but with justice and temper ; why should you imagine that they will be insensible to the good they receive, or whence suppose them incapable of esteeming and prizing such a mistress ? I could never, without indignation, hear it said that “ servants have no gratitude ;” as if the condition of servitude excluded the virtues of humanity ! The truth is, masters and mistresses have seldom any real claim to gratitude. They think highly of what they bestow, and little of the service they receive ; they consider only their own convenience, and seldom reflect on the kind of life their servants pass with them : they do not ask themselves, whether it is such an one as is consistent with the preservation of their health, their morals, their leisure for religious duties, or with a proper share of the enjoyments and comforts of life. The dissipated manners which now so generally prevail, perpetual absence from home, and attendance on assemblies or at public places, is, in all these respects, pernicious to the whole household ; and to the *men servants* absolutely ruinous : their only resource, in the tedious hours of waiting, whilst their masters and ladies are engaged in diversions, is to find out something of the same kind for themselves. Thus they are led into gaming, drinking, extravagance, and bad company ; and thus, by a natural progression, they become distressed and dishonest : that attachment and affiance, which ought to subsist between the dependent and

his protector, are destroyed. The master looks on his attendants as thieves and traitors, whilst they consider him as one whose money only gives him power over them; and who uses that power without the least regard to their welfare.

“The fool saith, I have no friends; I have no thanks for all my good deeds, and they that eat my bread speak evil of me.”—Ecclus. xx, 16. Thus foolishly do those complain, who choose their servants, as well as their friends, without discretion, or who treat them in a manner that no worthy person will bear.

I have been often shocked at the want of politeness, by which masters and mistresses sometimes provoke impertinence from their servants: a gentleman, who would resent to death an imputation of falsehood from his equal, will not scruple, without proof, to accuse his servant of it in the grossest terms. I have heard the most insolent contempt of the whole class expressed at a table, whilst five or six of them attended behind the chairs, who, the company seemed to think, were without senses, without understanding, or the natural feelings of resentment: these are cruel injuries, and will be retorted in some way or other.

If you, my dear, live to be at the head of a family, I hope you will not only avoid all injurious treatment of your domestics, but behave to them with that courtesy and good-breeding, which will heighten their respect as well as their affection. If, on any occasion, they do more than you have a right to require, give them, at least, the reward of seeing that they have obliged you. If, in your service, they have any hardship to endure, let them see

that you are concerned for the necessity of imposing it. When they are sick, give them all the attention and every comfort in your power, with a free heart and kind countenance; “not blemishing thy good deeds, nor using uncomfortable words, when thou givest any thing. Is not a word better than a gift?—but both are with a gracious man—a fool will upbraid churlishly, and a gift of the envious consumeth the eyes.”—Ecclus. xviii. 15.

Whilst you thus endear yourself to all your servants, you must ever carefully avoid making a favourite of any: unjust distinctions, and weak indulgences to one, will of course excite envy and hatred in the rest: your favourite may establish whatever abuses she pleases; none will dare to complain against her; and you will be kept ignorant of her ill practices, but will feel the effects of them, by finding all your other servants uneasy in their places, and, perhaps, by being obliged continually to change them.

When they have spent a reasonable time in your service, and have behaved commendably, you ought to prefer them, if it is in your power, or to recommend them to a better provision. The hope of this keeps alive attention and gratitude, and is the proper support of industry. Like a parent, you should keep in view their establishment in some way, that may preserve their old age from indigence; and to this end, you should endeavour to inspire them with care to lay up part of their gains, and constantly discourage in them all vanity in dress, and extravagance in idle expenses. That you are bound to promote their eternal, as well as temporal welfare, you cannot doubt; since, next to your children,

they are your nearest dependents. You ought, therefore, to instruct them as far as you are able, furnish them with good books, suited to their capacity, and see that they attend the public worship of God : and you must take care so to pass the sabbath-day, as to allow them time, on that day at least, for reading and reflecting at home, as well as for attendance at church. Though this is part of your religious duty, I mention it here, because it is also a part of family management : for the same reason I shall here take occasion earnestly to recommend family prayers, which are useful to all, but more particularly to servants ; who, being constantly employed, are led to the neglect of private prayer ; and whose ignorance makes it very difficult for them to frame devotions for themselves, or to choose proper helps, amidst the numerous books of superstitious or enthusiastic nonsense, which are printed for that purpose. Even in a political light, this practice is eligible ; since the idea which it will give them of your regularity and decency, if not counteracted by other parts of your conduct, will probably increase their respect for you, and will be some restraint, at least on their outward behaviour, though it should fail of that inward influence, which, in general, may be hoped from it.

The prudent distribution of your charitable gifts may not improperly be considered as a branch of economy, since the great day of alms-giving cannot be truly fulfilled without a diligent attention so to manage the sums you can spare as to produce the most real good to your fellow-creatures. Many are willing to give money, who will not bestow their time and consideration, and who therefore often

hurt the community, when they mean to do good to individuals. The larger are your funds, the stronger is the call upon you to exert your industry and care in disposing of them properly. It seems impossible to give rules for this ; as every case is attended with a variety of circumstances, which must all be considered. In general, charity is most useful, when it is appropriated to animate the industry of the young, to procure some ease and comforts to old age, and to support in sickness those whose daily labour is their only maintenance in health. They, who are fallen into indigence, from circumstances of ease and plenty, and in whom education and habit have added a thousand wants to those of nature, must be considered with the tenderest sympathy by every feeling heart. It is needless to say, that to such, the bare support of existence is scarcely a benefit, and that the delicacy and liberality of the manner in which relief is here offered, can alone make it a real act of kindness. In great families, the waste of provisions, sufficient for the support of many poor ones, is a shocking abuse of the gifts of Providence : nor should any lady think it beneath her to study the best means of preventing it, and of employing the refuse of luxury in the relief of the poor. Even the smallest families may give some assistance in this way, if care is taken that nothing be wasted.

I am sensible, my dear child, that very little more can be gathered from what I have said on economy, than the general importance of it, which cannot be too much impressed on your mind, since the natural turn of young people is to neglect, and even to despise it ; not distinguishing it from parsimony

and narrowness of spirit : but, be assured, my dear, there can be no true generosity without it ; and that the most enlarged and liberal mind will find itself not debased, but ennobled by it. Nothing is more common than to see the same person, whose want of economy is ruining his family, consumed with regret and vexation at the effect of his profusion ; and, by endeavouring to save in such trifles as will not amount to twenty pounds in a year, that which he wastes by hundreds, incur the character, and suffer the anxieties of a miser, together with the misfortunes of a prodigal. A rational plan of expense will save you from all these corroding cares, and will give you the full and liberal enjoyment of what you spend. An air of ease, of hospitality, and frankness, will reign in your house, which will make it pleasant to your friends and to yourself. “ Better is a morsel of bread,” where this is found, than the most elaborate entertainment, with that air of constraint and anxiety, which often betrays the grudging heart through all the disguises of civility.

That you, my dear, may unite in yourself the admirable virtues of generosity and economy, which will be the grace and crown of all your attainments, is the earnest wish of

Your ever affectionate.

VIII.

ON POLITENESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

WHILST you labour to enrich your mind with the essential virtues of Christianity;—with piety, benevolence, meekness, humility, integrity, and purity;—and to make yourself useful in domestic management, I would not have my dear child neglect to pursue those graces and acquirements, which may set her virtue in the most advantageous light, adorn her manners, and enlarge her understanding: and this, not in the spirit of vanity, but in the innocent and laudable view of rendering herself more useful and pleasing to her fellow creatures, and consequently more acceptable to God. Politeness of behaviour, and the attainment of such branches of knowledge, and such arts and accomplishments, as are proper to your sex, capacity, and station, will prove so valuable to yourself through life, and will make you so desirable a companion, that the neglect of them may reasonably be deemed a neglect of duty; since it is undoubtedly our duty to cultivate the powers entrusted to us, and to render ourselves as perfect as we can.

You must have often observed, that nothing is so strong a recommendation, on a slight acquaintance,

as *politeness*; nor does it lose its value by time or intimacy, when preserved, as it ought to be, in the nearest connexions and strictest friendships. This delightful qualification—so universally admired and respected, but so rarely possessed in any eminent degree—cannot but be a considerable object of my wishes for you: nor should either of us be discouraged by the apprehension, that neither I am capable of teaching, nor you of learning it in *perfection*—since whatever degree you attain will amply reward our pains.

To be perfectly polite, one must have great *presence of mind*, with a delicate and quick *sense of propriety*; or, in other words, one should be able to form an instantaneous judgment of what is fittest to be said or done, on every occasion, as it offers. I have known one or two persons, who seemed to owe this advantage to nature only, and to have the peculiar happiness of being born, as it were, with another sense, by which they had an immediate perception of what was proper and improper, in cases absolutely new to them: but this is the lot of very few; in general, propriety of behaviour must be the fruit of instruction, of observation, and reasoning; and is to be cultivated and improved like any other branch of knowledge or virtue. A good temper is a necessary ground-work of it; and, if to this is added a good understanding, applied industriously to this purpose, I think it can hardly fail of attaining all that is essential in it. Particular modes and ceremonies of behaviour vary in different countries, and even in different parts of the same town: these can only be learned by observation on the manners of those who are best skilled in them, and by keep-

ing what is called good company. But the principles of politeness are the same in all places. Wherever there are human beings, it must be impolite to hurt the temper, or to shock the passions of those you converse with : it must every where be good-breeding, to set your companions in the most advantageous point of light, by giving each the opportunity of displaying their most agreeable talents, and by carefully avoiding all occasions of exposing their defects ; to exert your own endeavours to please, and to amuse, but not to outshine them ; to give each their due share of attention and notice ; not engrossing the talk, when others are desirous to speak, nor suffering the conversation to flag, for want of introducing something to continue or renew a subject ; not to push your advantages in argument so far that your antagonist cannot retreat with honour :—in short, it is an universal duty in society, to consider others more than yourself ; “ in honour preferring one another.” Christianity, in this rule, gives the best lesson of politeness ; yet judgment must be used in the application of it : our humility must not be strained so far as to distress those we mean to honour ; we must not quit our proper rank, nor force others to treat us improperly, or to accept, what we mean as an advantage, against their will. We should be perfectly easy, and make others so if we can. But this happy ease belongs perhaps to the last stage of perfection in politeness, and can hardly be attained till we are conscious that we know the rules of behaviour, and are not likely to offend against propriety. In a very young person, who has seen little or nothing of the world, this cannot be ex-

pected ; but a real desire of obliging, and a respectful action, will, in a great measure, supply the want of knowledge, and will make every one ready to overlook those deficiencies, which are owing only to the want of opportunities to observe the manners of polite company. You ought not, therefore, to be too much depressed by the consciousness of such deficiencies, but endeavour to get above the shame of wanting what you have not had the means of acquiring. Nothing heightens this false shame, and the awkwardness it occasions, so much as vanity. The humble mind, contented to be known for what it is, and unembarrassed by the dread of betraying its ignorance, is present to itself, and can command the use of understanding, which will generally preserve you from any great indecorum, and will secure you from that ridicule, which is the punishment of affectation rather than of ignorance. People of sense will never despise you, whilst you act naturally ; but, the moment you attempt to step out of your own character, you make yourself an object of just ridicule.

Many are of opinion, that a very young woman can hardly be too silent and reserved in company ; and, certainly, nothing is so disgusting in youth as pertness and self-conceit : but modesty should be distinguished from an awkward bashfulness, and silence should be only enjoyed, when it would be forward and impertinent to talk. There are many proper opportunities for a girl, young even as you are, to speak in company, with advantage to herself ; and, if she does it without conceit or affectation, she will always be more pleasing than those who sit like statues, without sense or motion.

When you are silent, your looks should show your attention and presence to the company: a respectful and earnest attention is the most delicate kind of praise, and never fails to gratify and please: you must appear to be interested in what is said, and endeavour to improve yourself by it: if you understand the subject well enough, to ask now and then a pertinent question, or, if you can mention any circumstances relating to it that have not before been taken notice of, this will be an agreeable way of showing your willingness to make a part of the company, and will probably draw a particular application to you, from some one or other. Then, when called upon, you must not draw back as unwilling to answer, nor confine yourself merely to *yes* or *no*, as is the custom of many young persons, who become intolerable burdens to the mistress of the house, whilst she strives in vain to draw them into notice, and to give them some share in the conversation.

In your father's house it is certainly proper for you to pay civility to the guests, and to talk to them in your turn—with modesty and respect—if they encourage you to it. Young ladies of near your own age, who visit there, fall of course to your share to entertain. But, whilst you exert yourself to make their visit agreeable to them, you must not forget what is due to the elder part of the company, nor, by whispering and laughing apart, give them cause to suspect, what is too often true, that they themselves are the subjects of your mirth. It is so shocking an outrage against society, to talk of, or laugh at any person in his own presence, that one

would think it could only be committed by the vulgar : I am sorry, however, to say, that I have too often observed it amongst young ladies, who little deserved that title, whilst they indulged their overflowing spirits in defiance of decency and good-nature. The desire of laughing will make such inconsiderate young persons find a subject of ridicule, even in the most respectable character. Old age, which, if not disgraced by vice or affectation, has the justest title to reverence, will be mimicked and insulted ; and even personal defects and infirmities will too often excite contempt and abuse, instead of compassion. If you have ever been led into such an action, my dear girl, call it seriously to mind when you are confessing your faults to Almighty God : and be fully persuaded, that it is not one of the least which you have to repent of. You will be immediately convinced of this, by comparing it with the great rule of justice, that of doing to all as you would they should do unto you. No person living is insensible to the injury of contempt, nor is there any talent so invidious, or so certain to create ill-will, as that of ridicule. The natural effects of years, which all hope to attain, and the infirmities of the body, which none can prevent, are surely, of all others, the most improper objects of mirth. There are subjects enough that are innocent, and on which you may freely indulge the vivacity of your spirits ; for I would not condemn you to perpetual seriousness : on the contrary, I delight in a joyous temper, at all ages, and particularly at yours. Delicate and good-natured raillery amongst equal friends, if pointed only against such trifling errors

as the owner can heartily join to laugh at, or such qualities as they do not pique themselves upon, is both agreeable and useful ; but then it must be offered in perfect kindness and sincere good humour : if tinged with the least degree of malice, its sting becomes venomous and detestable. The person rallied should have liberty and ability to return the jest, which must be dropped upon the first appearance of its affecting the temper.

You will wonder, perhaps, when I tell you that there are some characters in the world, which I would freely allow you to laugh at ; though not in their presence. Extravagant vanity and affectation are the natural subjects of ridicule, which is their proper punishment. When you see old people, instead of maintaining the dignity of their years, struggling against nature to conceal them, affecting the graces, and imitating the follies of youth ; or a young person assuming the importance and solemnity of old age—I do not wish you to be insensible to the ridicule of such absurd deviations from truth and nature. You are welcome to laugh, when you leave the company, provided you lay up a lesson for yourself at the same time, and remember, that unless you improve your mind whilst you are young, you also will be an insignificant fool in old age ; and that if you are presuming and arrogant in youth, you are as ridiculous as an old woman with a head-dress of flowers.

In a young lady's behaviour towards gentlemen, great delicacy is certainly required : yet, I believe, women oftener err from too great a consciousness of the supposed views of men, than from inatten-

tion to those views, or want of caution against them. You are at present rather too young to want rules on this subject: but I could wish that you should behave almost in the same manner three years hence as now; and retain the simplicity and innocence of childhood, with the sense and dignity of riper years. Men of loose morals or impertinent behaviour must always be avoided: or, if at any time you are obliged to be in their company, you must keep them at a distance by cold civility: but, with regard to those gentlemen whom your parents think it proper for you to converse with, and who give no offence by their own manners—to them I wish you to behave with the same frankness and simplicity as if they were of your own sex. If you have natural modesty, you will never transgress its bounds, whilst you converse with a man, as one rational creature with another, without any view to the possibility of a lover or admirer, where nothing of that kind is professed; where it is, I hope you will ever be equally a stranger to coquetry and prudery; and that you will be able to distinguish the effects of real esteem and love from idle gallantry and unmeaning fine speeches: the slighter notice you take of these last, the better; and that, rather with good-humoured contempt, than with affected gravity: but the first must be treated with seriousness and well-bred sincerity; not giving the least encouragement which you do not mean, nor assuming airs of contempt where it is not deserved. But this belongs to a subject, which I have touched upon in a former letter. I have al-

ready told you, that you will be unsafe in every step which leads to a serious attachment, unless you consult your parents from the first moment you apprehend any thing of that sort to be intended : let them be your first confidants ; and let every part of your conduct, in such a case, be particularly directed by them.

With regard to accomplishments, the chief of these is a competent share of reading, well chosen and properly regulated : and of this I shall speak more largely hereafter. Dancing, and the knowledge of the French tongue, are now so universal, that they cannot be dispensed with in the education of a gentlewoman ; and indeed they both are useful as well as ornamental—the first, by forming and strengthening the body, and improving the carriage ; the second, by opening a large field of entertainment and improvement for the mind. I believe, there are more agreeable books of female literature in French than in any other language : and, as they are not less commonly talked of than English books, you must often feel mortified in company, if you are too ignorant to read them. Italian would be easily learned after French, and, if you have leisure and opportunity, may be worth your gaining, though in your station of life it is by no means necessary.

To write a free and legible hand, and to understand common arithmetic, are indispensable requisites.

As to music and drawing, I would only wish you to follow as Genius leads : you have some turn for the first, and I should be sorry to see you neglect a

talent, which will at least afford you an innocent amusement, though it should not enable you to give much pleasure to your friends. I think the use of both these arts is more for yourself than for others : it is but seldom that a private person has leisure or application enough to gain any high degree of excellence in them ; and your own partial family are perhaps the only persons who would not much rather be entertained by the performance of a professor than by yours : but, with regard to yourself, it is of great consequence to have the power of filling up agreeably those intervals of time which too often hang heavily on the hands of a woman, if her lot be cast in a retired situation. Besides this, it is certain that even a small share of knowledge in these arts will heighten your pleasure in the performances of others : the taste must be improved before it can be susceptible of an exquisite relish for any of the imitative arts : an unskilful ear is seldom capable of comprehending *harmony*, or of distinguishing the most *delicate* charms of *melody*. The pleasure of seeing fine paintings, or even of contemplating the beauties of nature, must be greatly heightened by our being conversant with the rules of drawing, and by the habit of considering the most picturesque objects. As I look upon taste to be an inestimable fund of innocent delight, I wish you to lose no opportunity of improving it, and of cultivating in yourself the relish of such pleasures as will not interfere with a rational scheme of life, nor lead you into dissipation, with all its attendant evils of vanity and luxury.

As to the learned languages, though I respect the

abilities and application of those ladies who have attained them, and who make a modest and proper use of them, yet I would by no means advise you, or any other woman, who is not strongly impelled by a particular genius, to engage in such studies. The labour and time which they require are generally incompatible with our natures and proper employments: the real knowledge which they supply is not essential; since the English, French, or Italian tongues afford tolerable translations of all the most valuable productions of antiquity, besides the multitude of original authors which they furnish; and these are much more than sufficient to store your mind with as many ideas as you will know how to manage. The danger of pedantry and presumption in a woman; of her exciting envy in one sex and jealousy in the other; of her exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar—would be, I own, sufficient to frighten me from the ambition of seeing my girl remarkable for learning. Such objections are perhaps still stronger with regard to the abstruse sciences.

Whatever tends to embellish your fancy, to enlighten your understanding, and furnish you with ideas to reflect upon when alone, or to converse upon in company, is certainly well worth your acquisition. The wretched expedient, to which ignorance so often drives our sex, of calling in slander to enliven the tedious insipidity of conversation, would alone be a strong reason for enriching your mind with innocent subjects of entertainment, which may render you a fit companion for persons of sense and knowledge, from whom you may reap the most de-

sirable improvements ; for though I think reading indispensably necessary to the due cultivation of your mind, I prefer the conversation of such persons to every other method of instruction : but this you cannot hope to enjoy, unless you qualify yourself to bear a part in such society, by, at least, a moderate share of reading.

Though *religion* is the most important of all your pursuits, there are not many *books* on that subject which I should recommend to you at present. Controversy is wholly improper at your age, and it is also too soon for you to inquire into the evidence of the truth of revelation, or to study the difficult parts of Scripture : when these shall come before you, there are many excellent books, from which you may receive great assistance. At present, practical divinity—clear of superstition and enthusiasm, but addressed to the heart, and written with a warmth and spirit capable of exciting in it a pure and rational piety—is what I wish you to meet with.

The principal study I would recommend is *history*. I know of nothing equally proper to entertain and improve at the same time, or that is so likely to form and strengthen your judgment, and, by giving you a liberal and comprehensive view of human nature, in some measure to supply the defect of that experience, which is usually attained too late to be of much service to us. Let me add, that more materials for conversation are supplied by this kind of knowledge, than by almost any other ; but I have more to say to you on this subject in a future letter.

The faculty, in which women usually most excel,

is that of imagination; and, when properly cultivated, it becomes the source of all that is most charming in society. Nothing you can read will so much contribute to the improvement of this faculty as *poetry*; which, if applied to its true ends, adds a thousand charms to those sentiments of religion, virtue, generosity, and delicate tenderness, by which the human soul is exalted and refined. I hope you are not deficient in natural taste for this enchanting art, but that you will find it one of your greatest pleasures to be conversant with the best poets whom our language can bring you acquainted with, particularly those immortal ornaments of our nation, Shakspeare and Milton. The first is not only incomparably the noblest genius in dramatic poetry, but the greatest master of nature, and the most perfect characterizer of men and manners: in this last point of view, I think him inestimable; and I am persuaded that, in the course of your life, you will seldom find occasion to correct those observations on human nature, and those principles of morality, which you may extract from his capital pieces. You will at first find his language difficult; but if you take the assistance of a friend, who understands it well, you will by degrees enter into his manner of phraseology, and perceive a thousand beauties, which at first lay buried in obsolete words and uncouth constructions. The admirable *Essay on Shakspeare*, which has lately appeared, so much to the honour of our sex, will open your mind to the peculiar excellences of this author, and enlighten your judgment on dramatic poetry in general with such force of reason and brilliancy of wit, as cannot fail to delight as well as instruct you.

Our great English poet, Milton, is as far above my praise, as his *Paradise Lost* is above any thing which I am able to read, except the sacred writers. The sublimity of his subject sometimes leads him into abstruseness ; but many parts of his great poem are easy to all comprehensions, and must find their way directly to every heart, by the tenderness and delicacy of his sentiments, in which he is not less strikingly excellent than in the richness and sublimity of his imagination. Addison's criticism in the *Spectators*, written with that beauty, elegance, and judgment, which distinguish all his writings, will assist you to understand and to relish this poem.

It is needless to recommend to you the translation of Homer and Virgil, which every body reads that reads at all. You must have heard that Homer is esteemed the father of poetry, the original from whence all the moderns, not excepting Milton himself, borrow some of their greatest beauties, and from whom they extract those rules for composition, which are found most agreeable to nature and true taste. Virgil, you know, is the next in rank among the classics : you will read his *Æneid* with extreme pleasure, if ever you are able to read Italian, in Annibal Caro's translation ; the idiom of the Latin and Italian languages being more alike, it is, I believe, much closer, yet preserves more of the spirit of the original, than the English translations.

For the rest, fame will point out to you the most considerable of our poets ; and I would not exclude any of name, among those whose morality is unexceptionable : but of poets, as of all others, I wish you to read only such as are properly recommended

to you ; since there are many who debase their divine art by abusing it to the purposes of vice and impiety. If you could read poetry with a judicious friend, who would lead your judgment to a true discernment of its beauties and defects, it would inexpressibly heighten both your pleasure and improvement. But, before you enter upon this, some acquaintance with the heathen mythology is necessary. I think that you must before now have met with some book under the title of *The Pantheon* :* and, if once you know as much of the gods and goddesses as the most common books on the subject will tell you, the rest may be learned by reading Homer : but then you must particularly attend to him in this view. I do not expect you to penetrate those numerous mysteries, those amazing depths of morality, religion, and metaphysics, which some pretend to have discovered in his mythology ; but to know the names and principal offices of the gods and goddesses, with some idea of their moral meaning, seems requisite to the understanding almost any poetical composition. As an instance of the moral meaning I speak of, I will mention an observation of Bossuet : That Homer's poetry was particularly recommended to the Greeks by the superiority which he ascribes to them over the Asiatics ; this superiority is shown in the *Iliad*, not only in the conquest of Asia by the Greeks, and in the

* There has been lately published a work particularly adapted to the use of young ladies, entitled, "A Dictionary of Polite Literature, or Fabulous History of Heathen Gods and illustrious Heroes," two Vols. with Plates.—*Ed.*

actual destruction of its capital, but in the division and arrangement of the gods, who took part with the contending nations. On the side of Asia, was Venus—that is, sensual passion, pleasure, and effeminacy, On the side of Greece was Juno—that is, matronly gravity and conjugal love ; together with Mercury—invention and eloquence ; and Jupiter, or political wisdom. On the side of Asia was Mars, who represents brutal valour and blind fury. On that of Greece was Pallas—that is, military discipline and bravery guarded by judgment.

This, and many other instances that might be produced, will show you how much of the beauty of the poet's art must be lost to you, without some notion of these allegorical personages. Boys, in their school-learning, have this kind of knowledge impressed on their minds by a variety of books ; but women, who do not go through the same course of instruction, are very apt to forget what little they read or hear on the subject :—I advise you, therefore, never to lose an opportunity of inquiring into the meaning of any thing you meet with in poetry or in painting, alluding to the history of any of the heathen deities, and of obtaining from some friend an explanation of its connexion with true history, or of its allegorical reference to morality or to physics.

Natural philosophy, in the largest sense of the expression, is too wide a field for you to undertake ; but the study of nature, as far as may suit your powers and opportunities, you will find a most sublime entertainment : the objects of this study are all the stupendous works of the Almighty hand, that lie within the reach of our observation. In

the works of man perfection is aimed at, but it can only be found in those of the Creator. The contemplation of perfection must produce delight, and every natural object around you would offer this delight, if it could attract your attention. If you survey the earth, every leaf that trembles in the breeze, every blade of grass beneath your feet, is a wonder as absolutely beyond the reach of human art to imitate as the construction of the universe. Endless pleasures, to those who have a taste for them, might be derived from the endless variety to be found in the composition of this globe and its inhabitants: the fossil, the vegetable, and the animal world, gradually rising in the scale of excellence,—the innumerable species of each, still preserving their specific differences from age to age, yet of which no two individuals are ever perfectly alike—afford such a range for observation and inquiry as might engross the whole term of our short life if followed minutely. Besides all the animal creation obvious to our unassisted senses, the eye, aided by philosophical inventions, sees myriads of creatures, which by the ignorant are not known to have existence: it sees all nature teem with life; every fluid—each part of every vegetable and animal, swarm with its peculiar inhabitants, invisible to the naked eye, but as perfect in all their parts, and enjoying life as indisputably, as the elephant or the whale.

But, if from the earth, and from these minute wonders, the philosophic eye is raised towards the heavens, what a stupendous scene there opens to its view! those brilliant lights that sparkle to the eye of ignorance as gems adorning the sky, or as

lamps to guide the traveller by night, assume an importance that amazes the understanding! they appear to be *worlds*, formed like ours for a variety of inhabitants, or *suns*, enlightening numberless other worlds too distant for our discovery! I shall ever remember the astonishment and rapture with which my mind received this idea, when I was about your age; it was then perfectly new to me, and it is impossible to describe the sensations I felt from a glorious, boundless prospect of infinite beneficence bursting at once upon my imagination! Who can contemplate such a scene unmoved? If our curiosity is excited to enter upon this noble inquiry, a few books on the subject, and those of the easiest sort, with some of the common experiments, may be sufficient for your purpose, which is to enlarge your mind, and to excite in it the most ardent gratitude and profound adoration towards that great and good Being, who exerts his boundless power in communicating various portions of happiness through all the immense regions of creation.

Moral philosophy, as it relates to human actions, is of still higher importance than the study of nature. The works of the ancients on this subject are universally said to be entertaining as well as instructive, by those who can read them in their original languages; and such of them as are well translated will undoubtedly, some years hence, afford you great pleasure and improvement. You will also find many agreeable and useful books, written originally in French, and in English, on morals and manners: for the present, there are works, which, without assuming the solemn air of philosophy, will en-

lighten your mind on these subjects, and introduce instruction in an easier dress : of this sort are many of the moral essays, that have appeared in periodical papers, which, when excellent in their kind, as are the *Spectators*, *Guardians*, *Ramblers*, and *Adventurers*, are particularly useful to young people, as they comprehend a great variety of subjects ; introduce many ideas and observations that are new to them ; and lead to a habit of reflecting on the characters and events that come before them in real life, which I consider as the best exercise of the understanding.

Books on taste and criticism will hereafter be more proper for you than at present : whatever can improve your discernment and render your taste elegant and just, must be of great consequence to your enjoyments as well as to the embellishments of your understanding.

I would by means exclude the kind of reading, which young people are naturally most fond of : though I think the greatest care should be taken in the choice of those *fictitious stories*, that so enchant the mind, most of which tend to inflame the passions of youth, whilst the chief purpose of education should be to moderate and restrain them. Add to this, that both the writing and sentiments of most novels and romances are such as are only proper to vitiate your style, and to mislead your heart and understanding. The expectation of extraordinary adventures, which seldom ever happen to the sober and prudent part of mankind, and the admiration of extravagant passions and absurd conduct, are some of the usual fruits of this kind of reading ;

which, when a young woman makes it her chief amusement, generally render her ridiculous in conversation, and miserably wrong-headed in her pursuits and behaviour. There are however works of this class in which excellent morality is joined with the most lively pictures of the human mind, and with all that can entertain the imagination and interest the heart. But, I must repeatedly exhort you, never to read any thing of the sentimental kind, without taking the judgment of your best friends in the choice; for I am persuaded, that the indiscriminate reading of such kind of books corrupts more female hearts than any other cause whatsoever.

Before I close this correspondence, I shall point out the course of history I wish you to pursue, and give you my thoughts of geography and chronology, some knowledge of both being, in my opinion, necessary to the reading of history with any advantage.

I am, my dearest niece,

Your ever affectionate.

IX.

ON GEOGRAPHY AND CHRONOLOGY.

MY DEAR NIECE,

I HAVE told you that you will not be able to read history with much pleasure or advantage, without some little knowledge of geography and chronology. They are both very easily attained, I mean in the degree that will be necessary for you. You must be sensible that you can know but little of a country, whose situation with respect to the rest of the world you are entirely ignorant of; and that it is to little purpose that you are able to mention a fact, if you cannot nearly ascertain the time in which it happened, which alone, in many cases, gives importance to the fact itself.

In geography, the easiest of all sciences, and the best adapted to the capacity of children, I suppose you to have made some beginning; to know at least the figure of the earth—the supposed lines—the degrees—how to measure distances—and a few of the common terms; if you do not already know these, two or three lessons will be sufficient to attain them; the rest is the work of memory, and is

easily gained by reading with maps ; for I do not wish your knowledge to be exact and masterly, but such only as is necessary for the purpose of understanding history, and, without which, even a newspaper would be unintelligible. It may be sufficient, for this end, if, with respect to ancient geography, you have a general idea of the situation of all the great states, without being able precisely to ascertain their limits ; but in the modern, you ought to know the bounds and extent of every state in Europe, and its situation with respect to the rest. The other parts of the world will require less accurate knowledge, except with regard to the European settlements.

It may be an useful and agreeable method, when you learn the situation of any important country, to join with that knowledge some one or two leading facts or circumstances concerning it ; so that its particular property may always put you in mind of the situation, and the situation, in like manner, recall the particular property. When, for instance, you learn in what part of the globe to find Ethiopia, to be told at the same time that, in that vast unknown tract of country, the Christian religion was once the religion of the state, would be of service, because the geographical and historical knowledge would assist each other. Thus, to join with Egypt, *the nurse and parent of arts and of superstition*—with Persia, *shocking despotism and perpetual revolutions*—with ancient Greece, *freedom and genius*—with Scythia, *hardness and conquest*—are hints which you may make use of as you please. Perhaps

annexing to any country the idea of some familiar form which it most resembles, may at first assist you to retain a general notion of it ; thus Italy has been called a *boot*, and Europe compared to a *woman sitting*.

The difference of the ancient and modern names of places is somewhat perplexing; the most important should be known by both names at the same time ; and you must endeavour to fix a few of those which are of most consequence so strongly in your mind, by thinking of them, and being often told of them, that the ancient name should always call up the modern one to your memory, and the modern the ancient : such as the *Ægean Sea*, now *The Archipelago*—*The Peloponnesus*, now *The Morea*—*Crete*, *Candia*—*Gaul*, *France*—*Babylon*, *Bagdat*—*Byzantium*—to which the Romans transplanted their seat of empire—*Constantinople*, &c.

There have been so many ingenious contrivances to make geography easy and amusing, that I cannot hope to add any thing of much service ; I would only prevail with you not to neglect acquiring, by whatever method pleases you best, that share of knowledge in it which you will find necessary, and which is so easily attained ; and I entreat that you would learn it in such a manner as to fix it in your mind, so that it may not be lost and forgotten among other childish acquisitions, but that it may remain ready for use through the rest of your life.

Chronology indeed has more of difficulty ; but if you do not bewilder yourself by attempting to learn too much and too minutely at first, you need not

despair of gaining enough for the purpose of reading history with pleasure and utility.

Chronology may be naturally divided into three parts, *the ancient* — *the middle* — and *the modern*. With respect to all these, the best direction that can be given, is to fix on some periods or epochs, which, by being often mentioned and thought of, explained and referred to, will at last be so deeply engraven on the memory, that they will be ready to present themselves whenever you call for them : these indeed should be few, and ought to be well chosen for their importance, since they are to serve as elevated stations to the mind, from which it may look backwards and forwards upon a great variety of facts.

Till your more learned friends shall supply you with better, I will take the liberty to recommend the following, which I have found of service to myself.

In the ancient chronology, you will find there were four thousand years from the creation to the redemption of man ; and that Noah and his family were miraculously preserved in the ark 1650 years after Adam's creation.

As there is no history, except that in the Bible, of any thing before the flood, we may set out from that great event, which happened, as I have said above, in the year of the world 1650.

The 2350 years, which passed from the deluge to our Saviour's birth, may be thus divided.—There have been four successive Empires called Universal, because they extended over a great part of the then

known world ; these are usually distinguished by the name of *the Four great Monarchies* : the first three of these are included in ancient chronology, and began and ended in the following manner :

1st. The ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, founded by Nimrod in the year of the world 1800, ended under Sardanapalus in 3250, endured 1450 years.

The Median, though not accounted one of the four great monarchies, (being conquests of rebels on the Assyrian empire) comes in here for about 200 years.

2d. The PERSIAN EMPIRE, which began under Cyrus, in the year of the world 3450, ended in Darius in 3670, before Christ 330, lasted a little more than 200 years.

3d. The GRECIAN EMPIRE, begun under Alexander the Great, in 3670, was, soon after his death, dismembered by his successors ; but the different parcels into which they divided it were possessed by their respective families, till the famous Cleopatra, the last of the race of Ptolemy, one of Alexander's captains who reigned in Egypt, was conquered by Julius Cæsar, about half a century before our Lord's birth, which is a term of about 300 years.

Thus you see that from the deluge to the establishment of the first great monarchy, the

Assyrian, is	150 years.
The Assyrian empire continued . . .	1450
The Median	200
The Persian	200
The Grecian	300
From Julius Cæsar, with whom began the fourth great monarchy, viz. the Roman, to Christ	50

In all 2350 years.

the term from the deluge to Christ.

I do not give you these dates and periods as correctly true, for I have taken only round numbers, as more easily retained by the memory; so that when you come to consult chronological books or tables, you will find variances of some years between them and the above accounts: but precise exactness is not material to a beginner.

I offer this short table as a little specimen of what you may easily do for yourself; but even this sketch, slight as it is, will give you a general notion of the ancient history of the world, from the deluge to the birth of Christ.

Within this period flourished the Grecian and Roman republics, with the history and chronology of which it will be expected you should be tolerably well acquainted; and indeed you will find nothing in the records of mankind so entertaining. Greece was divided into many petty states, whose various revolutions and annals you can never hope distinctly to remember; you are therefore to con-

sider them as forming together one great kingdom—like the Germanic body, or the United Provinces—composed separately of different governments, but sometimes acting with united force for their common interest. The Lacedemonian government, formed by Lycurgus, in the year of the world 3100—and the Athenian, regulated by Solon about the year 3440—will chiefly engage your attention.

In pursuing the Grecian chronology, you need only perhaps make one stand or epocha—at the time of Socrates, that wisest of philosophers, whom you must have heard of—who lived about 3570 years from the creation, and about 430 before Christ; for within the term of 150 years before Socrates, and 200 after him, will fall in most of the great events and illustrious characters of the Grecian history.

I must inform you that the Grecian method of dating time was by Olympiads—that is, four complete years, so called from the celebration, every fifth year, of the Olympic Games, which were contests in all the manly exercises, such as wrestling, boxing, running, chariot-racing, &c. They were instituted in honour of Jupiter, and took their name from Olympia, a city of Elis, near which they were performed: they were attended by all ranks of people, from every state in Greece; the noblest youths were eager to obtain the prize of victory, which was no other than an olive crown, but esteemed the most distinguishing ornament. These games continued all the time that Greece retained any spark of liberty; and with them begins the

authentic history of that country, all before being considered as fabulous. You must therefore endeavour to remember that they began in the year of the world 3228—after the flood 1570 years—after the destruction of Troy 400—before the building of Rome 23—before Cyrus about 200—and 770 before Christ. If you cannot retain *all* these dates, at least you must not fail to remember the near coincidence of the first Olympiad with the building of Rome, which is of great consequence; because, as the Grecians reckoned time by Olympiads, the Romans dated from the building of their city; and as these two æras are within 23 years of each other, you may, for the ease of memory, suppose them to begin together, in the year of the world 3228.

In reading the history of the Roman republic, which continued in that form of government to the time of Julius Cæsar's dictatorship, about the year of the world 3960, and about 48 years before Christ—you will make as many epochas as you shall find convenient: I will mention only two—the sacking of Rome by the Gauls, which happened in the year of the world 3620—in the 365th year of the city—in the 97th Olympiad—before Christ 385—and about 30 years before the birth of Alexander. The second epocha may be the 608th year of the city—when, after three obstinate wars, Carthage was destroyed, and Rome was left without a rival.

Perhaps the following bad verses, which were given me when I was young, may help to fix in your mind the important æras of the Roman and

Grecian dates. You must not laugh at them, for chronologers do not pique themselves on their poetry; but they make use of numbers and rhymes merely as assistance to memory, being so easily learned by heart.

“Rome and Olympiads bear the same date,
Three thousand two hundred and twenty-eight.
In three hundred and sixty * was Rome sack'd and torn,
Thirty summers before Alexander was born.”

You will allow that what I have said in these few pages is very easily learned—yet, little as it is, I will venture to say, that, was you as perfectly mistress of it as of your alphabet, you might answer several questions relating to ancient chronology more readily than many who pretend to know something of this science. One is not so much required to tell the precise year in which a great man lived, as to know with whom he was contemporary in other parts of the world. I would know then, from the slight sketch above given, about what year of the Roman republic Alexander the Great lived. You would quickly run over in your mind, “Alexander lived in the 3670th year of the world—330 before Christ—consequently he must have flourished about the 400th of Rome, which had endured 750 years when Christ was born.” Or, suppose it was asked what was the condition of Greece, at the time of the sacking of Rome by the Gauls; had any particular state, or the united

* That is, the 365th year of the city.

body, chosen then to take advantage of the misfortunes of the Romans? You consider that the 365th year of the city, the date of that event, is 385 before Christ: consequently this must have happened about the time of Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander, when the Grecians, under such a leader, might have extirpated the Roman nation from the earth, had they ever heard of them, or thought the conquest of them an object worthy their ambition.

Numberless questions might be answered in like manner, even on this very narrow circumscribed plan, if it was completely mastered. I might require that other periods or epochas should be learned with the same exactness—but these may serve to explain my meaning, and to show you how practicable and easy it is. One thing, however, I must observe, though perhaps it is sufficiently obvious; which is, that you can make no use of this sketch of ancient chronology, nor even hope to retain it, till you have read the ancient history. When you have gone through Rollin's *Histoire Ancienne* once, then will be the time to fix the ancient chronology deep in your mind, which will very much enhance the pleasure and use of reading it a second time; for you must remember that nobody reads a history to much purpose, who does not go over it more than once.

When you have got through your course of ancient history, and are come to the more modern, you must then have recourse to the second of the three divisions, viz. middle chronology; containing

about 800 years, from the birth of our Lord, and from within 50 years of the rise of the Roman empire, to Charlemagne, who died in 814.

This period, except in the earliest part of it, is too much involved in obscurity, to require a very minute knowledge of its history : it may be sufficient to fix two or three of the most singular circumstances by their proper dates.

The first epocha to be observed is the year of our Lord 330, when Constantine, the first Christian emperor, who restored peace to the oppressed and persecuted church, removed the seat of empire from Rome to Byzantium, called afterwards from him Constantinople. After his time, about the year 400, began those irruptions of the Goths and Vandals, and other northern nations, who settled themselves all over the western parts of the Roman empire, and laid the foundation of the several states which now subsist in Europe.

The next epocha is the year 622 (for the ease of memory say 600,) when Mahomet, by his successful imposture, became the founder of the Saracen empire, which his followers extended over a great part of Asia and Africa, and over some provinces of Europe. At the same time, St. Gregory, bishop of Rome, began to assume a spiritual power, which grew by degrees into that absolute and enormous dominion, so long maintained by the popes over the greatest part of Christendom. St. Augustine, a missionary from St. Gregory, about this time, began the conversion of Great Britain to Christianity.

The third and concluding epocha in this division,

is the year 800 ; when Charlemagne, king of France, after having subdued the Saxons, repressed the Saracens, and established the temporal dominion of the pope by a grant of considerable territories, was elected emperor of the West, and protector of the church. The date of this event corresponds with that remarkable period of our English history, the union of the Heptarchy, or seven kingdoms, under Egbert.

As to the third part of chronology, namely the modern, I shall spare you and myself all trouble about it at present ; for if you follow the course of reading which I shall recommend, it will be some years before you reach modern history ; and when you do, you will easily make periods for yourself, if you do but remember carefully to examine the dates as you read, and to impress on your memory those of very remarkable reigns or events.

I fear you are by this time tired of chronology ; but my sole intention, in what I have said, is to convince you that it is a science not out of your reach, in the moderate degree that is requisite for you : the last volume of the *Ancient Universal History* is the best English chronological work I know ; if that does not come in your way, there is an excellent French one, called *Tablettes Chronologiques de l'Histoire Universelle*, du Fresnoy, 3 tomes, Paris ; there is also a chart of universal history, including chronology, and a biographical chart, both by Pricstley, which you may find of service to you.

Indeed, my dear, a woman makes a poor figure,

who affects, as I have heard some ladies do, to disclaim all knowledge of times and dates: the strange confusion they make of events, which happened in different periods, and the stare of ignorance, when such are referred to as are commonly known, are sufficiently pitiable; but the highest mark of folly is to be proud of such ignorance—a resource, in which some of our sex find great consolation.

Adieu, my dear child! I am, with the tenderest affection,

Ever yours.

X.

ON READING HISTORY.

MY DEAR NIECE,

WHEN I recommend to you to gain some insight into the general history of the world, perhaps you will think I propose a formidable task ; but your apprehensions will vanish, when you consider that of near half the globe we have no histories at all ; that of other parts of it a few facts only are known to us ; and that even of those nations which make the greatest figure in history, the early ages are involved in obscurity and fable : it is not indeed allowable to be totally ignorant even of those fables, because they are the frequent subjects of poetry and painting, and are often referred to in more authentic histories.

The first recorders of actions are generally poets : in the historical songs of the bards are found the only accounts of the first ages of every state ; but in these we must naturally expect to find truth mixed with fiction, and often disguised in allegory. In such early times, before science has enlightened the minds of men, the people are ready to believe every thing ; and the historian, having no restraints from the fear of contradiction or criticism, delivers the

most improbable and absurd tales as an account of the lives and actions of their forefathers ; thus the first heroes of every nation are gods, or the sons of gods ; and every great event is accompanied with some supernatural agency. Homer, whom I have already mentioned as a poet, you will find the most agreeable historian of the early ages of Greece ; and Virgil will show you the supposed origin of the Carthaginians and Romans.

It will be necessary for you to observe some regular plan in your historical studies, which can never be pursued with advantage, otherwise than in a continued series. I do not mean to confine you solely to that kind of reading ; on the contrary, I wish you frequently to relax with poetry, or some other amusement, whilst you are pursuing your course of history ; I only mean to warn you against mixing ancient history with modern, or general histories of one place with particular reigns in another ; by which desultory manner of reading, many people distract and confound their memories, and retain nothing to any purpose from such a confused mass of materials.

The most ancient of all histories, you will read in your Bible : from thence you will proceed to *l'Histoire Ancienne* of Rollin, who very ingeniously points out the connexion of profane with sacred history, and enlivens his narrative with many agreeable and improving reflections, and many very pleasing detached stories and anecdotes, which may serve you as resting-places in your journey. It would be an useful exercise of your memory and judgment, to recount these interesting passages to a friend,

either by letter or in conversation ; not in the words of the author, but in your own natural style ; by memory, and not by book ; and to add whatever remarks may occur to you. I need not say that you will please me much, whenever you are disposed to make this use of me.

The want of memory is a great discouragement in historical pursuits, and is what every body complains of. Many artificial helps have been invented, of which, those who have tried them can best tell you the effects ; but the most natural and pleasant expedient is that of conversation with a friend, who is acquainted with the history which you are reading. By such conversations, you will find out how much is usually retained of what is read, and you will learn to select those characters and facts which are best worth preserving : for it is by trying to remember every thing without distinction, that young people are so apt to lose every trace of what they read. By repeating to your friend what you can recollect, you will fix it in your memory ; and if you should omit any striking particular, which ought to be retained, that friend will remind you of it, and will direct your attention to it on a second perusal. It is a good rule, to cast your eye each day over what you read the day before, and to look over the contents of every book when you have finished it.

Rollin's work takes in a large compass ; but, of all the ancient nations it treats of, perhaps there are only the Grecians and Romans, whose stories ought to be read with any anxious desire of retaining them perfectly : for the rest, such as the

Assyrians, Egyptians, &c. I believe you will find, on examination, that most of those who are supposed tolerably well read in history, remember no more than a few of the most remarkable facts and characters. I tell you this, to prevent your being discouraged on finding so little remain in your mind after reading these less interesting parts of ancient history.

But when you come to the Grecian and Roman * stories, I expect to find you deeply interested, and highly entertained; and, of consequence, eager to treasure up in your memory those heroic actions and exalted characters by which a young mind is naturally so much animated and impressed. As Greece and Rome were distinguished as much for genius as valour; and were the theatres, not only of the greatest military actions, the noblest efforts of liberty and patriotism, but of the highest perfection of arts and sciences, their immortal fame is a subject of wonder and emulation, even to these distant ages: and it is thought a shameful degree of ignorance, even in our sex, to be unacquainted with the nature and revolutions of their governments, and with the characters and stories of their most illustrious heroes. Perhaps, when you are told that the government and the national character of your own countrymen have been compared with those of the Romans, it may not be an useless amusement, in reading the Roman history, to carry this

* Dr. Goldsmith's Histories of Greece and Rome are generally considered as most useful to young persons.

Editor.

observation in your mind, and to examine how far the parallel holds good. The French have been thought to resemble the Athenians in their genius, though not in their love of liberty. These little hints sometimes serve to awaken reflection and attention in young readers: I leave you to make what use of them you please.

When you have got through Rollin, if you add Vertot's *Revolutions Romaines*—a short and very entertaining work—you may be said to have read as much as is absolutely necessary of ancient history. Plutarch's *Lives of famous Greeks and Romans* (a book deservedly of the highest reputation) can never be read to so much advantage as immediately after the histories of Greece and Rome: I should even prefer reading each life in Plutarch, immediately after the history of each particular hero, as you meet with him in Rollin or in Vertot.

If hereafter you should choose to enlarge your plan, and should wish to know more of any particular people or period than you find in Rollin, the sources from which he drew may be open to you; for there are, I believe, French or English translations of all the original historians, from whom he extracted his materials.

Crevier's continuation of Rollin, I believe, gives the best account of the Roman emperors down to Constantine. What shocking instances will you there meet with, of the terrible effects of lawless power on the human mind! How will you be amazed to see the most promising characters changed by flattery and self-indulgence into mon-

sters that disgrace humanity ! To read a series of such lives as those of Tiberius, Nero, or Domitian, would be intolerable, were we not consoled by the view of those excellent emperors, who remained uncorrupted through all temptations. When the mind, disgusted, depressed, and terrified, turns from the contemplation of those depths of vice to which human nature may be sunk ; a Titus, the delight of mankind, a Trajan, an Antoninus, restore it to an exulting sense of the dignity to which that nature may be exalted by virtue. Nothing is more awful than this consideration : a human creature given up to vice is infinitely below the most abject brute ; the same creature, trained by virtue to the utmost perfection of his nature, “ is but a little lower than the angels, and is crowned with glory and immortality.”

Before you enter upon the modern history of any particular kingdom, it will be proper to gain some idea of that interval between ancient and modern times, which is justly called the dark and barbarous ages, and which lasted from Constantine to Charlemagne, perhaps one might say to some centuries after. On the irruption of the northern barbarians, who broke the Roman empire, and dissipated all the treasures of knowledge, as well as of riches, which had been so long accumulating in that enormous state, the European world may be said to have returned to a second infancy ; and the monkish legends, which are the only records preserved of the times in which they were written, are not less fabulous than the tales of the demi-gods. I must profess myself ignorant how to direct you to any

distinct or amusing knowledge of the history of Europe during this period : * some collect it from Puffendorff's Introduction ; some from the Universal History ; and now, perhaps, with more advantage and delight, from the first volume of Robertson's Charles the Fifth, in which he traces the progress of civilization, government, and arts, from the first settlement of the barbarians ; and shows the foundation of the several states into which Europe is now divided, and of those laws, customs, and politics, which prevail in this quarter of the world.

In these dark ages, you will find no single character so interesting as that of Mahomet, that bold impostor, who extended his usurped dominion equally over the minds and property of men, and propagated a new religion, whilst he founded a new empire, over a large portion of the globe. His life has been written by various hands.

When you come to the particular histories of the European states, your own country seems to demand the precedence ; and there is no part more commodious to set out from ; since you cannot learn the history of Great Britain, without becoming, in some degree, acquainted with almost every neighbouring nation, and without finding your curiosity excited to know more of those with whom we are most connected.

By the amazing progress of navigation and commerce, within the last two or three centuries, all

* Russell's History of Modern Europe will give all the information requisite.—*L.d.*

parts of the world are now connected; the most distant people are become well acquainted, who, for thousands of years, never heard of one another's existence: we are still every day exploring new regions; and every day see greater reason to expect that immense countries may yet be discovered, and America no longer retain the name of the *New World*. You may pass to every quarter of the earth, and find yourself still in the British dominion: this island, in which we live, is the least portion of it; and, if we were to adopt the style of ancient conquerors, we might call it the throne from which we rule the world. To this boast we are better entitled than some of those who formerly called themselves *masters of the globe*, as we possess an empire of greater extent, and, from the superior advantages of our commerce, much greater power and riches: but we have now too many rivals in dominion, to take upon us such haughty titles.

You cannot be said to know the history of that empire, of which you are a subject, without knowing something of the East and West Indies, where so great a part of it is situated; and you will find the accounts of the discovery and conquests of America very entertaining, though you will be shocked at the injustice and cruelty of its conquerors. But with which of the glorious conquerors of mankind must not humanity be shocked? Ambition, the most remorseless of all passions, pursues its object by all sorts of means: justice, mercy, truth, and every thing most sacred, in vain oppose its progress! Alas, my dear, shall I venture to tell you that the history of the world is little else than

a shocking account of the wickedness and folly of the ambitious? The world has ever been, and, I suppose, ever must be, governed and insulted by these aspiring spirits; it has always, in greater or less degree, groaned under their unjust usurpation.

But let not the horror of such a scene put a stop to your curiosity: it is proper you should know mankind as they are: you must be acquainted with the heroes of the earth, and perhaps you may be too well reconciled to them: mankind have in general a strong bias in their favour; we see them surrounded with pomp and splendour; every thing that relates to them has an air of grandeur; and, whilst we admire their natural powers, we are too apt to pardon the detestable abuse of them, to the injury and ruin of the human race. We are dazzled with false glory, and willingly give into the delusion; for mighty conquests, like great conflagrations, have something of the sublime, that pleases the imagination, though we know, if we reflect at all, that the consequences of them are devastation and misery.

The Western and Eastern world will present to you very different prospects. In America, the first European conquerors found nature in great simplicity; society still in its infancy; and, consequently, the arts and sciences yet unknown; so that the facility with which they overpowered these poor innocent people, was entirely owing to their superior knowledge in the arts of destroying. They found the inhabitants brave enthusiastic patriots, but without either the military or political arts

necessary for their defence. The two great kingdoms of Mexico and Peru had alone made some progress in civilization ; they were both formed into regular states, and had gained some order and discipline : from these, therefore, the Spaniards met with something like an opposition. At first indeed the invaders appeared supernatural beings, who came upon them flying over the ocean, on the wings of the wind, and who, mounted on fiery animals, unknown in that country, attacked them with thunder and lightning in their hands ; for such the fire-arms of the Spaniards appeared to this astonished people. But from being worshipped as gods, they soon came to be feared as evil spirits ; and in time, being discovered to be men, different from the Americans only in their outrageous injustice, and in the cruel arts of destroying, they were abhorred and boldly opposed. The resistance, however, of a million of these poor naked people, desperately crowding on each other to destruction, served only to make their ruin more complete. The Europeans have destroyed, with the most shocking barbarity, many millions of the original inhabitants of these countries, and have ever since been depopulating Europe and Africa to supply their places.

Though our own countrymen have no reason to boast of the justice and humanity of their proceedings in America, yet, in comparison with those of the Spaniards, our possessions there were innocently acquired. Some of them, gained by conquest, or cession, from Spain and from other European powers, some by contract with the natives, or by

settlements on uninhabited lands.* We are now possessed of a series of colonies, extending above two thousand miles along the whole Eastern coast of North America, besides many islands of immense value. These countries, instead of being thinly peopled by a few hordes of ignorant savages, are now adorned with many great cities, and innumerable rich plantations, which have made ample returns to their mother-country for the dangers and expenses which attended their first establishment. Blest with more natural advantages than almost any country in the world, they are making a swift progress in wealth and grandeur, and seem likely, in some future period, to be as much the seat of empire and of science as Europe is at present. Whether their attainments in virtue and happiness will keep pace with their advancement in knowledge, wealth, and power, is much to be questioned; for you will observe, in your historical view of the several great empires of the world, that as each grew up towards the highest pitch of greatness, the seeds of destruction grew up with it: luxury and vice, by debasing the minds and enervating the bodies of the people, left them all, in their turns, an easy prey to poorer and more valiant nations.

In the East, the Europeans introduced themselves in a milder way; admitted first as traders, and for the more commodious carrying on their commerce, indulged by the powers of the country in establishing a few small factories—they, by gentle degrees, extended and strengthened their settlements there,

* This work was first printed in 1773.

till their force became considerable enough to be thought an useful auxiliary to contending princes ; and, as it has often happened to those who have called in foreign powers to interfere in their domestic contentions ; by availing themselves of the disturbances of a dismembered monarchy, they at length raised a power almost independent of their employers. Soon, the several European nations, who had thus got footing in the Indies, jealous of each other's growing greatness, made the feuds of the native princes subservient to their mutual contests, till, within a few years, the English, by a happy concurrence of circumstances, obtained the mastery, and expelled their rivals from all their considerable settlements.

The rapidity of our conquests here has been perhaps equal to that of the first invaders of America ; but from different causes. Here we found an old established empire advanced to its crisis ; the magnificence and luxury of the great carried to the highest excess, and the people in a proportionable degree of oppression and debasement. Thus ripe for destruction, the rivalships of the viceroys, from the weakness of the government, become independent sovereigns ; and the dastardly spirit of the meaner people, indifferent to the cause for which they were compelled to fight,—encouraged these ambitious merchants to push their advantages farther than they could at first have supposed possible : with astonishment they saw the intrepid leaders of a few hundreds of brave free Britons, boldly oppose and repeatedly put to flight millions of these effeminate Indian slaves ; and, in a short time, raise from them an empire much larger than their mother country.

From these remote quarters of the world, let us now return to Great Britain, with the history of which you ought certainly to acquaint yourself, before you enter upon that of any other European kingdom. If you have courage and industry enough to begin so high as the invasion of Julius Cæsar, before which nothing is known of the inhabitants of this island, you may set out with Rapin, and proceed with him to William the Conqueror. From this æra there are other histories of England more entertaining than his, though I believe none esteemed more authentic. Party so strongly influences both historians and their readers, that it is a difficult and invidious task to point out the best amongst the number of English histories that offer themselves: but as you will not read with a critical view, nor enter deeply into politics, I think you may be allowed to choose that which is most entertaining: and, in this view, I believe the general voice will direct you to Hume, though he goes no farther than the Revolution. Among other historians, do not forget my darling Shakspeare—a faithful as well as a most agreeable one—whose historical plays, if read in a series, will fix in your memory the reigns he has chosen, more durably than any other history. You need not fear his leading you into any material mistakes, for he keeps surprisingly close to the truth, as well in the characters as in the events. One cannot but wish he had given us a play on the reign of every English king—as it would have been the pleasantest and perhaps the most useful way of becoming acquainted with it.

For the other portion of Great Britain, Robert-

son's History of Scotland is a delightful work, and of a moderate size.

Next to your own country, France will be the most interesting object of your inquiries ; our ancient possessions in that country, and the frequent contests we have been engaged in with its inhabitants, connect their history with our own. The extent of their dominion and influence ; their supposed superiority in elegance and politeness ; their eminence in the arts and sciences ; and that intercourse of thought, if so I may call it, which subsists between us, by the mutual communication of literary productions—make them peculiarly interesting to us ; and we cannot but find our curiosity excited to know their story, and to be intimately acquainted with the character, genius, and sentiments of this nation.

I do not know of any general history of France, that will answer your purpose, except that of Mezerai, which even in the abridgment is a pretty large work : there is a very modern one by Velly and others, which perhaps may be more lively, but is still more voluminous, and not yet completed. From Mezerai you may proceed with Voltaire to the end of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth.

In considering the rest of Europe, your curiosity may be confined within narrower limits. Modern history is, from the nature of it, much more minute and laborious than the ancient ; and to pursue that of so many various kingdoms and governments, would be a task unequal to your leisure and abilities, at least, for several years to come ; at the same time, it must be owned, that the present system of

politics and commerce has formed such a relation between the different powers of Europe, that they are in a manner members of one great body; and a total ignorance of any considerable state would throw an obscurity even upon the affairs of your own country: * an acquaintance, however, with the most remarkable circumstances that distinguish the principal governments will sufficiently enlighten you, and will enable you to comprehend whatever relates to them in the histories with which you are more familiar. Instead of referring you, for this purpose, to dull and uninteresting abridgments, I choose rather to point out to you a few small tracts, which exhibit striking and lively pictures, not easily effaced from the memory, of the constitutions and the most remarkable transactions of several of these nations. Such are

Sir William Temple's Essay on the United Provinces.
His Essay on Heroic Virtue, which contains some
account of the Saracen Empire.

Vertot's *Revolutions de Suède*.

————— *de Portugal*.

Voltaire's *Charles XII. de Suède*.

————— *Pierre le Grand*.

Puffendorff's Account of the Popes, in his *Introduction to Modern History*.

Some part of the history of Germany and Spain, you will see more in detail in Robertson's *History of*

* The History of Modern Europe may be read with particular advantage. *Ed.*

Charles the Fifth, which I have already recommended to you in another view.

After all this, you may still be at a loss for the transactions of Europe, in the last fifty years : for the purpose of giving you, in a very small compass, some idea of the state of affairs during that period, I will venture to recommend one book more—Campbell's State of Europe.*

Thus much may suffice for that moderate scheme, which I think is best suited to your sex and age. There are several excellent histories, and memoirs of particular reigns and periods, which I have taken no notice of in this circumscribed plan, but with which, if you should happen to have a taste for the study, you will hereafter choose to be acquainted : these will be read with most advantage, after you have gained some general view of history ; and they will then serve to refresh your memory, and settle your ideas distinctly ; as well as enable you to compare different accounts of the persons and facts which they treat of, and to form your opinions of them on just grounds.

As I cannot, with certainty, foresee what degree of application or genius for such pursuits you will be mistress of, I shall leave the deficiencies of this collection to be supplied by the suggestions of your more informed friends, who, if you explain to them how far you wish to extend your knowledge, will direct you to the proper books.

* This work has not been published for some years ; Guthrie's Geographical and Historical Grammar is the best work of the kind, at present.

But if, instead of an eager desire for this kind of knowledge, you should happen to feel that distaste for it, which is too common in young ladies who have been indulged in reading only works of mere amusement, you will perhaps rather think that I want mercy in offering you so large a plan, than that there needs an apology for the deficiencies of it : but comfort yourself with the assurance that a taste for history will grow and improve by reading ; that as you get acquainted with one period or nation, your curiosity cannot fail to be awakened for what concerns those immediately connected with it ; and thus you will insensibly be led on from one degree of knowledge to another.

If you waste in trivial amusement the next three or four years of your life, which are the prime season of improvement, believe me, you will hereafter bitterly regret their loss, when you come to feel yourself inferior in knowledge to almost every one you converse with ; and, above all, if you should ever be a mother, when you feel your own inability to direct and assist the pursuits of your children, you will then find ignorance a severe mortification and a real evil. Let this, my dear, animate your industry ; and let not a modest opinion of your own capacity be a discouragement to your endeavours after knowledge : a moderate understanding, with diligent and well-directed application, will go much farther than a more lively genius, if attended with that impatience and inattention, which too often accompanies quick parts. It is not from want of capacity, that so many women are such trifling, insipid companions—so ill qualified for the friendship and con-

versation of a sensible man—or for the task of governing and instructing a family: it is much oftener from the neglect of exercising the talents which they really have, and from omitting to cultivate a taste for intellectual improvement: by this neglect, they lose the sincerest of pleasures; a pleasure which would remain when almost every other forsakes them; which neither fortune nor age can deprive them of; and which would be a comfort and resource in almost every possible situation of life.

If I can but inspire you, my dear child, with the desire of making the most of your time and abilities, my end is answered; the means of knowledge will easily be found by those who diligently seek them; and they will find their labours abundantly rewarded.

And now, my dear, I think it is time to finish this long correspondence—which, though in some parts it may have been tedious to you, will not, I hope, be found entirely useless in any. I have laid before you all that my maturest reflections could enable me to suggest, for the direction of your conduct through life. My love for you, my dearest child, extends its views beyond this frail and transitory existence; it considers you as a candidate for immortality; as entering the lists for the prize of your high calling; as contending for a crown of unfading glory: it sees, with anxious solicitude, the dangers that surround you, and the everlasting shame that must follow, if you do not exert all your strength in the conflict. Religion therefore has been the basis of my plan—the principle to which every other pursuit is ultimately referred.

Here then I have endeavoured to guide your researches, and to assist you in forming just notions on a subject of such infinite importance; I have shown you the necessity of regulating your heart and temper, according to the genuine spirit of that religion, which I have so earnestly recommended as the great rule of your life. To the same principle I would refer your attention to domestic duties, and even that refinement and elegance of manners, and all those graces and accomplishments, which will set your virtues in the fairest light, and will engage the affection and respect of all who converse with you. Endeared to society by these amiable qualities, your influence in it will be more extensive, and your capacity of being useful proportionably enlarged. The studies, which I have recommended to you, must be likewise subservient to the same views: the pursuit of knowledge, when it is guided and controlled by the principles I have established, will conduce to many valuable ends: the habit of industry it will give you, the nobler kind of friendships for which it will qualify you, and its tendency to promote a candid and liberal way of thinking, are obvious advantages. I might add, that a mind well informed in the various pursuits which interest mankind, and the influence of such pursuits on their happiness, will embrace, with a clearer choice, and will more steadily adhere to, those principles of virtue and religion, which the judgment must ever approve, in proportion as it becomes enlightened.

May those delightful hopes be answered, which have animated my heart, while, with diligent at-

tention, I have endeavoured to apply to your advantage all that my own experience and best observation could furnish. With what joy should I see my dearest girl shine forth a bright example of every thing that is amiable and praiseworthy!—and how sweet would be the reflection, that I had, in any degree, contributed to make her so! My heart expands with the affecting thought, and pours forth, in this adieu, the most ardent wishes for your perfection! If the tender solicitude expressed for your welfare by this “labour of love” can engage your gratitude, you will always remember how deeply your conduct interests the happiness of

Your most affectionate aunt.

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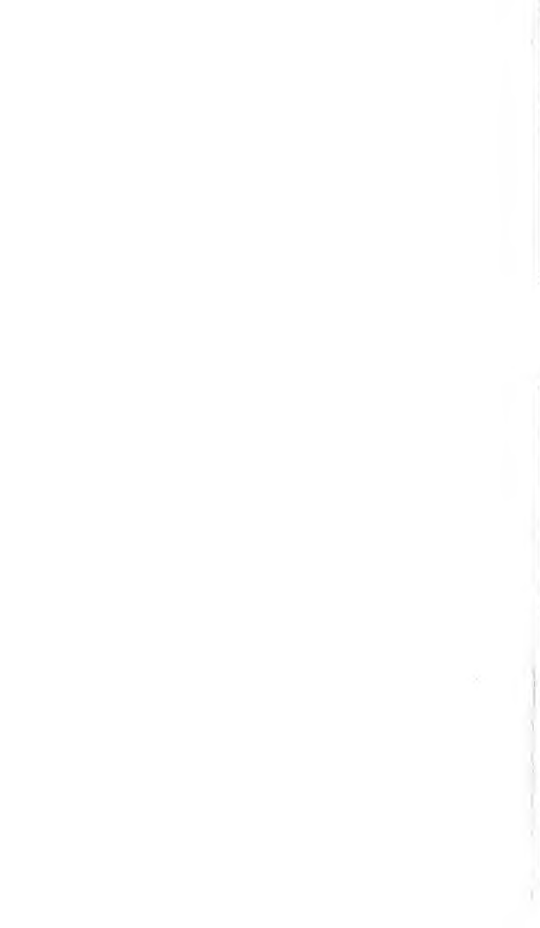
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